

THINKWELL

LIKE A THINKTANK, BUT DEEPER

ISSUE #13

December 1992 (A.S. XXVII)

COMMENTS on THINKWELL

WOW! Not just vitamins for the brain, but candy as well! I just finished devouring #12 and found it quite as toothsome as the previous 11. I love getting TW. It keeps the fire alive and will probably bring me back someday, when school slows down! Well I'm hooked, though I really had no doubt I would be. *ThinkWell* is becoming legend. It's an impressive piece of work. Some of the names I've grown up with as legends ("Eat your veggies or Duke will get you.") are contributing to this and it makes the SCA seem real—not so distant to me. Thank you (at least a thousand times) for *ThinkWell*. I love dipping into the "conversation in progress" of *ThinkWell*. [It's] like a letter from home. Somehow, *ThinkWell* always arrives when I desperately need a reminder that at least a few members of the Society are able to write rationally about what we're doing. I guess nothing gets ideas going like other ideas. So if I get you ten new subscribers, do I win a toaster? It is great to find out that I'm not the only person thinking about some of these things. Just knowing that someone else (especially someone I respect) agrees with me makes me feel better and encouraged. Thank you for a place to sound off. I really feel honored to be associated with such noble thinkers! Thanks!

"TALK RADIO"

What do you mean, "you can't read it while you drive to work"? Where's your sense of adventure????? If we go to tape, I'm hiring Master Thomas the Wordsmith to read all of my offerings. It'll lend at least the credibility of his voice of command to my rantings.

—Edward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

FROM THE EDITOR

In re-reading #12, I noticed some inconsistencies. I spelled "okay" two different ways in a single paragraph. So I checked my dictionaries. There were four ways listed, so I felt much better. OK! On with the show.

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CHIVALRY

It is refreshing to read people's comments on chivalry and the virtues that comprise it. To my mind, it is the chivalric spirit that should drive SCA activities and, given that all people are imperfect, it can be an effective ideology to pull people toward more ethical behavior.

In *ThinkWell* #11, Christopher Kensor posed a question we have bantered around quite a bit over the last several years: "Chivalry seems to be more of a guideline, and honor more of a personal code. What do you think the distinction is?"

If we can agree, to some extent, on what chivalry and honor are, this can go a long way to identifying some of the glue that binds our diverse membership together. Here's a start:

1. *Chivalry* is a set of virtues, an ideology of sorts, developed by historical knights, literary figures, and romantics, and our own experiences. Though several people will put forward several different sets of virtues concerning what should be included, most would include prowess, courage, generosity, humility, sincerity, and (hold your breath—) faith, amongst others. Our faith may be expressed very differently from a medieval knight's, but the element of faith cannot be denied. This is of necessity an incomplete definition, but I think it gets the idea across. Chivalry is essentially a set of virtues. (Would anyone care to comment on the specific virtues they think should make up a set? I'd like to include such thoughts in the journal *Chronique* as well if you are willing.)

2. *Honor* is very different. Although many people have taken honor to be their own personal code, this is I think more a matter of integrity. Honor accounts for the renown gained by actions that are perceived to be chivalric. In other words, honor is given to you by other people when they are impressed with something you have done. By the same token, dishonor is acquired when they perceive an action to be unchivalrous, ungentlemanly, etc.

Your own chivalric code may be different from those around you, because everyone ranks the virtues differently. For some, prowess is much more important than generosity, for example. Although many cannot, in all probability, order their beliefs for you on a piece of paper, their beliefs are fairly evident from their actions on the field. The field provides a stress that tests the beliefs, and makes it a looking glass into the character. Whether you gain or lose honor there is up to you.

When you begin bouts with the phrase "for honor and

chivalry," you remind a combatant that their honor, their renown, is on the line, and also that they are bound to compete within the bounds of a generally accepted view of chivalry. It is a good phrase and one that speaks well of those who take it to heart.

—Brion Thornebird [West]

The tournament field is not the only arena in our Society. People can manifest some of the elements of chivalry and gain (or lose) honor in their work in the arts, or in their dealings with other people. When someone refuses to admit an error, is there much difference between that and the apparent failure to take blows? If an autocrat or officer deflects criticism, blaming other people and circumstances rather than ever saying "sorry," is that like "rhinohiding"?

—ÆlflaED of Duckford [Outlands]

Duke John the Bearkiller contends that the use of force to protect and defend is justice, but it is not chivalry. I would contend rather that chivalry is to protect and defend where needed—sometimes, if necessary, with force, but more often with words or merely with presence. Chivalry is more about the ends (defense of the defenseless) than about the means ("temper and violence" in John's words). Therefore the use of violence where it is not needed is not chivalry, and cannot be excused as such, because it converts what might be defense of one person to a gratuitous attack on another—and gratuitous violence is not chivalry.

—William the Lucky [West]

On the Pell with Legs; or how to get novice fighters to come to fighter practice more than once.

Being a Companion of the Order of the Venerable Guard of the Outlands gives me, if not the right, the excuse to pontificate. And so I shall. Picture it yourself, an eager novice (newbie is too mundane for me and I herewith dispense with it) shows up at fighter practice, is draped in the "loaner armor" (armor which is either bits and pieces cast off by fighters, a semi-full suit donated by a fighter because the donator discovered it looked much better than it protected, or both) and is then whumped on by whichever fighter is either willing to teach the poor child or cannot avoid the duty.

Armoring up some novice and starting them out heavy is no different than showing someone who wants to learn to swim all the strokes you know, at poolside, and then throwing them off the diving board into the deep end and yelling at them to kick their feet and swing their arms just like you showed them, all the while shouting, "No, no, not that way! If you do that you'll drown!" When the novice gets to the side of the pool and dry land, all too often he walks away and never come back.

Right! But you say that's how everybody starts. This is true, it is how I started. Worse even. When I first picked up a sword the need for a cup was impressed upon me by the point of a sword, not a word in my ear. The only reason for introducing novices to the joys of swordplay the way we do is that either nobody has come up with a better way so far or that pounding novices is some ritualized macho poop way of separating the sheep from the goats. One hopes the former is

the truth. If it is then maybe people will listen when I say that there is a better way—one that has worked for more than two years for me.

I start my students out with boffers, heavy boffers and not ones suitable for children. They are made of plastic water pipe inside a tube of foam water-pipe insulation and have barrel plastic basket hilts. My students wear a heavy knee-length quilted gambeson, cup, gorget, elbow pads and a freon-can helmet which limits their vision. The boffers sting and make a lot of noise but they can't hurt you. When I teach I wear a cup, jeans, a gorget and helm and nothing else. Fighting bare chested shows my students that I am not lying when I tell them the boffers won't injure and also that the only reason they are armored is so they will get used to fighting hot, sweaty, constricted and half blind.

My boffers are to rattan what the shinai is to the bokken and they serve the same purpose. With heavy boffers my students can and do fight all day long (a lot longer than I want to) without getting dented and discouraged. The boffers also let me fire away at my full speed and power which is good because I have never been able to go slow or "half-speed."

By the time I move my student up to rattan (when we have made them proper fitted armor) they have only a quantitative difference not a qualitative one to adjust to. (Fun is handing one of my grad students, i.e. a green card holder, a boffer and the novice a rattan sword and letting them go at it.)

All I do is start them out in the shallow end of the pool with their water-wings and let them move into deeper water at their own pace.

I am fortunate that even with 18 years of fighting I still feel like a raw beginner much of the time. I am only a little better than the people I introduce to SCA combat. I take pride in taking novices and teaching them the basics of combat, etiquette, ethics, and armoring without intimidating them even unintentionally with my swordly prowess. Once my students have green cards, they graduate from my kindergarten and are ready to study under the masters and mistresses of the sword and find their own way. (All my graduates can whup me 7 out of 10 no matter how deep I dig into my bag of tricks, which is exactly as it should be.)

Plans for my boffers are available from me for *either* one dollar *or* a long SASE. Average cost per boffer is \$4-\$6 and they last with periodic retaping. I finally broke one recently after using it for two and a half years. It only broke because I drilled a hole through the pipe for a pin to attach the hilt. My current design employs hose clamps. Send inquiries etc. to Keith Allan Hunter, 3142 W. 26th Ave. No. 1, Denver CO 80211.

—Tule of Tehri [Outlands]

Quote: We fight for four reasons: Safety, Honor, Fun and To Win."

I like those priorities.

—William Blackfox [Ansteorra]

The quote is from #11, page 20, Sir Chrystofer Kensor quoting Sir Lars Viljamsson. Kensor won Calontir's most recent Crown Tournament.

—ælflaED

MUNDANES & PEASANTS

In Issue 11 (under "The Order of the Pelican"), Charles of Dublin makes a reasonable-sounding offhand comment that "...our analogues to peasants are machines and mundanes."

Yes on one, but please, no on two. There *is* a tendency for people in the Society to treat the mundanes as if they were our peasants, and it's one of the worst ways in which we hurt our public image. Regardless of how you feel about the gawkers, *always* treat them like royalty. Remember that they're the ones who are writing us up for the local paper. (I agree there are ways in which mundanes make decent analogues to the peasantry, but it's simply too easy to follow that through to *treating* them like peasants. Better to think of them as foreign dignitaries instead—it tends to lead one down better paths...)

—Justin du Coeur [East]

HOSPITALITY

One of the **nicest things about the SCA** is that the office of the Registry will send a sample newsletter if you tell them you are expecting to move. This is much more efficient than waiting for the mail to get straightened out after you get there. When we arrived in Starkhafn we had the Crown Prints, called the Baron, and were invited over that very evening.

—Æthelthryth of Acleah [Caid]

What responsibility does a group have toward the continued attraction (entertainment? shepherding? special treatment?) of new or transplant members?

I am Baroness and feel that part of my job is to introduce myself to every unfamiliar face as a part of the welcome to Lochmere. To me this is by far the most stressful thing I do. Too often my efforts come to naught. I have seen bunches of people pass through without getting active. Folks show up, talk, sound interested and then disappear. A variety of tactics have been tried, but it seems like good people still show up then fade away. I feel responsible, like I've missed something. My question is what is my responsibility to these people? I can give them information, talk to them, but it seems like there are people who want more. Sometimes it seems these folks expect a special invitation before they will decide to play here. Sometimes it seems extreme to me. This is my SCA hometown; I've never lived anywhere else.¹ What do folks who move around think is a good effort from the locals?

—Siobhan O'Riordan [Atlantia]

This question has been pursued to some extent. I wrote to Siobhan telling her a couple of stories of people who moved there from the Outlands who felt that the locals were not happy to see them. It took them a while to feel welcome. One was a knight, and separate from that was a laurel and her husband.

Siobhan wrote back "Maybe it's the air out here or something. One thing you mention in your description of their experience is that their peerage was treated like no big deal.

That can be common around here especially since the greater Northern Atlantia co-prosperity sphere is rife with them. So from peers you get the 'oh, another peer,' and from non-peers you get 'oh, *another* peer' (from southerners you get 'oh, another northern peer').

"...This makes me wonder if it's all related to a deeper regional difference. If so, my question is all the more important."

One of my comments had been that we try to wine and dine transferred people—we take them sightseeing, invite them to *everything*, and generally make a big deal. Siobhan describes their schedule there, which basically has no open evenings and few weekends.

The crux of the matter, though, could easily be related to this, in Siobhan's words: "Part of the problem may be the sheer density of groups and people. At my own fighter practice I'm never sure if it's someone new to my group, someone visiting from the two other local baronies or maybe from the four other local shires."

Earl Dafydd was asked his sage opinion on this, too, and he suggests both size and culture are factors: "Size: the Lochmere fighting practice is about the same size as the al-Barran practice. The number of people it draws from is very large, however. Within an hour's drive of me in Northern Storvik there are three Baronies (Storvik, Ponte Alto, and Lochmere) and four Shires (Bright Hills, Highland Forde, Dun Carraig, and Stierbach). In this region is probably more than 1/3 of the whole kingdom population, say about 450 SCA members or more. Further, we get some trickle-through from Markland, Dagohir, etc., and this is their biggest activity area. What all of this means, size-wise, is that I can go to a fighting practice and see a new face and have no idea if this new person is from outkingdom, or from Markland, or a local newbie, or just someone from one of the other groups who doesn't make it to fighting practice much and has been active for several years. It just isn't possible to tell. Further there will be several such people at virtually every Lochmere fighting practice (and the Ponte Alto practice, and so on) that I make it to. And in the other direction, even though I make it to virtually every single Lochmere fighting practice and most local events, I've met people who have been active for a year or more and never met me before."

"Culture: one of the differences I noticed in the Outlands was a cultural one, and I'm guessing it is an East-coast versus Southwest cultural difference, not just interkingdom anthropology. Down there people would come up to a stranger, try to get to know him (me), take him (me) out for dinner, and all the first time this stranger is seen. Here, on the other hand, if a stranger is in the corner watching fighting practice quietly people will be much slower in their approach. Someone will usually come up and talk to the new person, ask a few non-probing questions, and perhaps that will lead to more conversation, but the whole process is very different. In the Outlands the stranger is almost aggressively brought in; this can feel very awkward if you are from the East-coast cultural aesthetic. In the East people are more likely to assume that you are watching quietly by preference, rather than by shyness, and contact is made just enough to provide the new person room to come out if they want, and not so much as to pressure them.

¹ Siobhan is the Baroness of Lochmere, in Maryland.

This can feel like being shunned if you are from the Outlands, and used to a much more direct approach."

My suggestion to him was that if he thought the Albuquerque crowd was aggressive, he should stay out of Salt Lake City. I don't know if the barony there is still as friendly as they once were, but there was a time when you could hardly get away without more hospitality than you could ever repay.

Are there suggestions (other than that Lochmere should be more friendly and al-Barra should leave people sitting in the shade if they want to sit)? This is a *great* example of a time when a blueprint for behavior would not work well in all kingdoms, but there might be some suggestions which would help.

—Ælflaed (with extensive quotes from Siobhan O'Riorddain and Dafydd ap Gwystl)

In my infrequent cynical moods I have been very entertained by the difference in hospitality shown when visiting other areas where I am unknown between when I am wearing my coronet and when I am not.

I am only a baroness, which is not very flashy when you are talking about brass hats. A couple of years ago when visiting a neighboring kingdom I chose to wear a cap in the afternoon to watch the tourney because I had a headache and the coronet I had brought along to match my court garb for the feast tends to make headaches worse. During the tourney a number of people were very kind to me and made real efforts to welcome me. At the feast that night when I wore full court garb and a coronet, a number of people who had been at the tourney and ignored the stranger in their midst suddenly were fluttering around, almost bodily separating me from my companions of the afternoon with whom I intended to sit.

The kingdom is irrelevant, however, because I witnessed a LOT of changes in attitudes toward me even in my home barony after the coronet had been placed on my head. It made me really grateful that I already knew pretty well who my friends were before I had to deal with people who just wanted to hang around with someone wearing a coronet.

—Ferelith MacDonald [Atenveldt]

KNIGHTHOOD for EVERYBODY

If this system goes in, people will start taking about "real knights" (fighting peers) and "fake knights." I would much rather be a real Master than a fake Knight. In fact, isn't that what this odious term "faggot knight" means?

Nobody gets respect because of the awards they have. It is simply untrue that people decide what respect an award deserves, and then accord its members that respect. Rather, they judge the people in it, then use that as a basis for measuring the award. I do not get respect based on my Pelican. The Pelican gets its respect based on what people think of me and my peers.

—Robin of Gilwell [Ansteorra]

Many years ago a person in our shire made the ingenuous suggestion that since everyone in the SCA obviously wanted to become a knight, why not go ahead and do it? By making a Knight a Day, eventually everyone would

be a knight and everybody would be happy!

Well...wouldn't they?

My ballot is in, too. I say NoNoNoNo!!! Who could possibly imagine that the alleged inequities of the three peerages could be mollified by making them all into Knighthoods and then offering Mastery to those who do not swear fealty?

I am comfortable enough with the title of Master. So what if it was a "guild title"? Aren't our concepts of Royal Peerage skewed enough to allow that we can make our own reality and live with it?

I believe that Knights earn their unique title, having experienced the bruises and the batterings and pissing blood from time to time. Its uniqueness should be preserved. Remember that we are not a perfect representation of reality but, by and large, an idealisation of a Victorian concept of the Middle Ages.

The system is working just fine. Leave it alone.

—William Blackfox [Ansteorra]

Treating the symptoms, not the disease, and worse, driving a wedge between Olde Pharts and those less set in their ways. This strikes me as a classic case of making a bad situation worse.

—Ædward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

Bernard suggests that the idea of calling all peers in fealty "Knight" and those not in fealty "Master" makes lots of sense. Sorry, but I have to say "Ick" to the whole thing—while I'm strongly in favor of uniting the Peerages a bit more, I *really* hate this proposal.

One of the least period ideas that the Society has is this concept that all knights have to be in fealty to the King. The title "Master of Arms" is a hack to get around a restriction that was silly in the first place. If you want to make all Peers Knights, that's okay (I don't much *like* it, but I don't especially dislike it). But expanding one of the Society's most unperiod title-atrocities makes little sense to me. "Knight" and "Master" were completely unrelated titles in period; linking them in the SCA is a bad idea.

—Justin du Coeur [East]

Just as a rose by any other name still smells the same, a peer by any other name is still a peer. Whether they are called Sir, Dame, Master, Mistress or Hey You they are still peers. Their *true* respect comes not by the *title* they are called but from the way they *act toward others*.

—Teresa Berconi [Meridies]

Hell, I'm not even a qualified fighter—I certainly don't want to be a Knight. Maybe I'm an old fogey, but it took me a while to get used to being Mistress Rhiannon—Sir Rhiannon is more than I can swallow. But yes, if the Board is gonna insist—I'll opt for Sir over Dame, but I won't be Mistress X, Knight of the Pelican. Maybe Joe Q. New-Kid-on-the-Block might not be as confused at first, but then, differentiating between the three different peerages is probably the least of the things they're considering. There is lots of stuff to digest when you get involved in the Society—and it

doesn't all happen overnight. And hey—where is our option to leave it the hell alone. If it ain't broke—don't fix it.

—Mistress Rhiannon of the Isle [Meridies]¹

I think the “less equal” perception problem is not so much one of semantics (titles, insignia of rank, etc.) as it is one of image. Knights are visible. Everyone sees what they do (fight, teach, lead). Pelicans and Laurels for the most part do their things behind the scenes, or in a lowkey manner. Organizing and teaching a calligraphy class doesn’t usually make people stop and stare. The few times that Laurels do become visible is during A&S competitions or displays. How does one make Pelicans visible without making them look uppity? Everything they do is behind the scenes. For the Laurels, one good idea (and one that is spreading) is the Laurels’ Prize Tournament.

Some other things that I (Boy, am I going to get slammed for this one) have observed over the years is that (GULP!), some (not all) Laurels and Pelicans have more of a tendency to be overly critical of others, involved in adverse political situations, and gossip more than the knights do. (There, I said it.) This does not help their image either.

I don’t think that changing titles or forms of address is going to solve the problem. Part of the answer lies in visibility, not only as an order, but also as individuals. Developing some type of regalia that is highly visible would help....

...[about the alleged negative connotations:] I don’t know how the title of Master/Mistress was regarded when the SCA first started, but I do know it is now regarded as having an extremely high status....

I live in the south. If there were going to be any negative connotations to the titles of Master/Mistress, it would be here. I have never heard any negative connotations to these titles. If there are negative feelings in your area, the first step should be to find out why the populace feels that way. Is it really the titles themselves, or might there be other reasons besides the titles?....

—Uillean MacUillean [Meridies]²

It has been my proud privilege for the past five years to be addressed as “Mistress Susannah” by virtue of membership in the Order of the Laurel. Recently I was doubly honored to be inducted into the Order of the Pelican.

The furthering of the welfare and dignity of both of these Orders and of the Society itself has long been an important priority in my life. Now it would seem that we should be concerned more with protecting the Society through preserving our traditions and our way of life in the Current Middle Ages.

I find it shocking and amazing that after a quarter century of living comfortably with the traditional orders and titles used in our Society some people wish to make sweeping changes that could upset/anger many long-time members and endanger the very continued existence of our Society. Although the BOD letter in the *TI* is written as though the desire for change were universal, I know for a fact that it is not so.

To address the points in the proposal:

1. Although it is true that non-fighting knighthoods were awarded *in England* during the later part of our period of study, the vast majority of Society members I know have personas from either earlier times or other lands. It does not seem fair, or appropriate, to impose late-period English traditions on all of the wide range of personas that our Society now makes welcome.
2. The perception held by some people that the peerages are not equal or treated equally is decidedly not universal across the Known World. Since Calontir became a kingdom nearly ten years ago, we have maintained equality for our peerages and peers. The only occasion when the Chivalry precede the Laurels and Pelicans is in a march of precedence by order—based only upon the dates the Orders were created within the Society.

In Calontir any person becoming a peer is offered the option of having a vigil. Most accept. Our vigil ceremony includes many time-honored symbols of Calontir, the ideals of peerage, and items symbolic of the specific Order into which the candidate has been invited. All our Peers, both bestowed and noble, are invited to join in placing the candidate on vigil, and to impart their advice and wisdom during personal vigil visits afterward. Peers of any order may volunteer to perform any part of the vigil ceremony. This gives each vigil its own character and personal touches.

Calontir’s sumptuary laws designate several insignia of rank for each Order. The Chivalry are allowed chain, belt or baldric, spurs, and a cloak of estate. The Laurels are allowed a badge, headgear displaying the laurel wreath, and a cloak of estate. The Pelicans are allowed a badge, a cap of maintenance, and a cloak of estate. The choice to wear any or all of the insignia on a regular basis depends upon the level of flamboyance or modesty of the peer, or upon the occasion.

3. I personally do not feel that the issue of possible “negative connotations” of the titles “Master” and “Mistress” is a worthy one for Peers. Aren’t we supposed to be above such petty modern concerns as “political correctness”? People who feel embarrassed by these titles should examine their own inner bias and seek to rise above it rather than to seek to change the way everyone else behaves to suit their personal sensitivities.

One major reason why a number of peers use other titles, such as “Baron/Baroness” or other titles indicating noble rank,

¹ “I joined the Society in the summer of 1983. I’ve spent my entire SCA career in the same local group, the Shire of the Osprey (Mobile AL). I’ve been the local reeve since 1985. I’ve also been deputy seneschal of the group. I was a regional reporting deputy to the kingdom Minister of Arts (back when we had separate Arts and Sciences offices here); was Deputy Kingdom Seneschal for 2.5 years, kingdom seneschal for three years, chancellor to the Crown during the reign of TRM Ryan and Gillian and am currently Marshal of Horse of the Meridian Equestrian College and a member of the Meridian Equestrian Team. I’ve been a hyper-active autocrat...embroidery...warranted combat marshal (though I am not currently an authorized fighter...) ...costumer, a sometime bureaucrat and oftentimes party animal.” Rhiannon has many service and arts awards and has been a Pelican since April 1989.

² The Honorable Laird Uillean MacUillean wrote, “I joined the Society in September of 1975. For the first year I was mostly a stick-jock with an outrageous French accent. Then I started to do more research. I changed my name and persona, and became a more mature and learned stick-jock with an outrageous Scottish accent. I have been in Meridies almost all of my SCA life. A stint in the U.S. Coast Guard did allow me, however, to broaden my SCA experiences.” He has been seneschal and marshal of his barony and has been deputy to many different offices, and has received many service awards. “My current interests, in no particular order are: archery, war, heraldry, fighting, war, furniture making, cooking, war, combat archery, period camping, armoring, strategy and tactics, current medieval anthropology, war and BOD watching.”

rather than "Master/Mistress" is because of our frequent contacts with modern people who are unfamiliar with the usages within our Society. Modern people have been influenced by literature and film to be more impressed by titles of nobility, especially in the U.S. where such titles have been prohibited by law for two centuries. Noble titles can sound more glamorous or important. As we do demos and educational activities for modern guests, it is important to use any tools at our disposal to help build the magic and improve the experience for them.

Many civic groups, fraternal and social organizations, and schools have titles indicating internal award status, but their members rarely use these titles in contact with the outside world. It requires much more tedious explanation to guests when titles of rank that may be unfamiliar to them are used. It is often easier not to confuse people on their first contact with the SCA, and only explain what "Master/Mistress" means within our Society after they have joined us.

4. For many years new members of the Society have had a "generalized term of politeness" that may be used to address those who have yet to be awarded Arms—"milord/milady." This address has a more medieval "feel" for new people. There is no real need to replace this usage.

Regarding the issue of fealty: In Calontir we have always offered each new peer, of any Order, the *option* of swearing fealty. The invitation to swear fealty is made to all peers as part of every Coronation ceremony. Indeed, we also extend the invitation to other members of the populace as well.

In Calontir, members of the Chivalry who have sworn fealty during the current reign usually wear the chain. Laurels and Pelicans who have sworn fealty during the current reign may wear their badge upon a gold chain. (Although no one keeps score and polices it!)

Most of us grew up with fairy tales and stories of the Knights of the Round Table. We imagined ourselves as the "valiant Sir Whatchamacallit," slaying dragons and jousting. Such are childhood dreams. Within our Society we find the amazing opportunity, as grown-ups, to actually become "Sir So-and-So."

In our modern world, the general perception of the title "Sir" is that it means a knight, and that translates to "armored fighter, usually on a horse." If, within our Society, we use the title "Sir," or alternatively "Dame," to address individuals who do not fit the modern perceptions we will greatly increase the potential for confusion.

In addition, I believe that such usage in our Society would cheapen the title, rather than enhance the respect shown to members of the Orders of the Laurel and Pelican. I fear that people will see it as a petty and ridiculous pretense. Our Orders, and the Peers in them, stand to lose the respect they already have.

I would suggest that the current proposals be abandoned and disposed of properly. The true basis of this issue seems to be that some Laurels and Pelicans do not feel that they are getting enough respect, or as much respect as they believe that members of the Chivalry are getting.

To change title usages that have long been honored tradition will only be an attempt at treating the symptoms of the underlying problem. Perhaps it would be wiser, and more

fair to the rest of us, to standardize peerage vigils, ceremonies, and insignia throughout all the kingdoms, sharing what seems to be best and working most successfully. Rather than change the whole Society, would it not be better to attack the problem where it exists and seek to solve the problems there and enhance the peerages' perceptions among the populace?

Respect cannot be gained through fancy titles or numerous outward symbols. Respect is given to the person who earns it through his/her actions. Respect for the Order depends upon the respect given to its individual members as they represent it.

It would behoove those unhappy individuals who believe they get no respect (Didn't Rodney Dangerfield run that into the ground?) to examine their own lives and behavior. Perhaps their lack of respect is a result of lack of deserving. Perhaps they have had their peerage so long that newer Society members don't know why they got it in the first place. Perhaps they are resting on their laurels or sitting on their nests. If they want to enhance their popular image and be more respected, they should become more active and earn it through involvement in activities of the Society, doing service, teaching, and good hard work. That's what people respect and honor.

—Susannah Griffon [Calontir]

It is often very difficult for me to share anecdotes of my life because the other people involved are living, hanging around, and maybe reading *ThinkWell*. I will venture a toe into the waters of actuality for a moment, because my view of this issue is colored by where I originally heard of it.

When the Outlands was a new kingdom, six years ago, Gunwaldt and I were king and queen. We wrote to all the peers and said, "Tell us what should be done, and we will do as many of the good things peers want done as we can do." Many letters came, and they were sensible and encouraging. One letter came from a Laurel and it went on and on about how we should revamp the title structure, and that there should be a special title for someone who had been prince once and king once, and a different one for someone who had been prince twice, and all the peers should be knights, because he would like to be a knight of the laurel. We were stunned that someone who had been around as long as this person had been would not know that titles of peerage didn't come from kings, but from the board. I wrote a nice letter saying that gee, we couldn't do anything about titles like that, that it would need to be a request through Laurel and to the board and all, but thanks for writing.

It surprised me quite a bit when a person who knew that little about the proper source of such decisions and rulings was made a principal herald soon after, not having been a herald before that.

It did not surprise me when, before long, I started hearing rumors that "the heralds" wanted some things that had been in that letter. Gee. I'm the one who suggested the proper course.

I think no one in our readership will be offended by the following statement: Although it's an inspiring legal and social concept, all men are not created equal. Some are big burly men. Some are testosterone-laden gorillas who feel no pain. Some fall to the far other end of the continuum. In the

middle we have those balanced souls whose strength of body and mind are complemented by their noble character and sensitive concern for others. From that group come guys it is easy to love, knights it's easy to be proud of, people everyone's glad to know. I'm not talking about those guys.

On the testosterone-poor end of the scale, for whatever biochemical reasons, are many artists. Many of them are also noble and sensitive. Some are just sensitive. A few are jealous of the attention shown to the burly-men, and they want to hurt them.

When a Laurel is jealous of a Knight, I agree with some of the others who have written here; it is a problem on the part of the Laurel.

People on this planet respect hunters and men who can build log cabins singlehandedly, and football players and winners of physical competitions. We in the SCA didn't invent that, and we can neither prevent it nor vote it out of existence. We can't pretend it away.

If the fine print on a high school letter sweater says "basketball" I think you will feel differently about that person than if it says "newspaper" or "home economics club." You should not be faulted for having the natural feelings of a human being.

Calling Laurels "Sir" won't give them more testosterone. It won't make them bigger. It won't make people respect them more. It would make them look silly. It would make them smaller. It would make people snicker behind their backs.

Calling all the peers "Sir" would detract from the special title given to one of the most clearly medieval elements we have—the knights. We don't have castles, we don't have many horses, we don't have huge, round oak tables, but we do have knights in armor. The Society was created for the purpose of putting on feasts and tournaments. Offices and arts events came later. Let's not move the focus from our glorious tournaments to the sewing sessions and paperwork which should be behind the scenes.

The SCA as a group has given artists and public servants an honor equal to that which they have given the knights. I outrank anyone who was knighted after I was made a member of the Order of the Pelican. There are hundreds of Laurels who outrank knights. These are clear statements that service is as important to the Society as is skill in combat, and that the arts are revered and artists are rewarded. All the knights know and understand this. Most of the Laurels and Pelicans understand it and are glad of it. A few of the Laurels seem to be having a problem.

A small but seminal point should be made before December is out: One of my favorite things to hear or tell about the SCA is "If you have any problems with anyone, ask a knight to help you." Think of the full range of hormone- and body-types you know of in all of the Order of the Laurel. The vision and the feeling created by that suggestion would never be the same.

—Ælflaed of Duckford,
a 5'4" aging weakling of a
don't-call-me-to-save-you-from-drunks Laurel

IF YOU HAVE NOT WRITTEN TO THE BOARD
WITH YOUR OPINION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CALL
LAURELS AND PELICANS KNIGHTS AND "SIR," THE
DEADLINE FOR COMMENT IS DECEMBER 31, 1992.
See T.I. #103 (Summer '92) page 8, for the exact questions.

The post office box should be 1754 rather than 1654.

ARTS AND SCIENCES

My recollection is that [they were combined] at the corporate level some time ago, and that the kingdoms on our coast (at least) followed suit (or had already gone that direction). In fact, I was surprised to find out that Calontir still had them separate. The best reason to combine them, to my mind, is to avoid the old "is it an art or a science?" question.

—Keilyn FitzWarin [Atlantia]

To answer Susannah Griffon's query about combining the Arts and Sciences, do it! Ansteorra did this many years ago, and it's worked out just fine. It removes the artificial and sometimes arbitrary boundary between the two classes, which recent issues of *The Mews* suggest is still a problem in Calontir. I will confess that I am pretty much an A&S "outsider" in that I don't enter competitions, and most of my work falls into the category of "it may not be pretty or authentic, but it works," but I've never heard any of my artisan friends complaining about the combination, either.

To answer the broader question of what the duties of an A&S officer should be, I would suggest the following: Be a clearinghouse for information and teachers—you may not know anything about drop spinning or dishing metal, but you do know where to find someone who does, or where to find books about it at least. Help to publicize the works of artisans in general by sponsoring or helping with exhibits and competitions. (I don't like the competition style where one person is the "winner" and everyone else "loses." I much prefer the type where everyone is awarded points based on the merits of the individual work, and anyone with a high enough score gets recognized. Let's face it—most of us have fragile enough egos anyway. Why bruise them if we don't have to?) Encourage the dissemination of information by sponsoring classes. This could be at a Kingdom-level university, a baronial once-a-month class, or anything in between.

I tend to agree with the idea that the SCA is held together much more strongly by the arts and sciences than by fighting. After all, everybody needs period clothing, even newbie fighters need armor, and courts and feasts work a lot better with flashy heraldic display and period foods. But most of this stuff is like air—we don't notice it unless it's not there, or it's blowing us away.

—Tivar Moondragon [Ansteorra]

I have a theory about combining the arts and sciences into one office. Every few years (3-5 at a guess), your kingdom (principality/barony/province) changes systems—if they were combined, you separate them; if they were separate, you combine them. This maintains a state of unrest, while

allowing those who are actually doing the work to get on with it without having to worry about the current bureaucratic system.

—William the Lucky [West]

Even as we speak, we're moving to consolidate the two offices throughout the Kingdom of Meridies. In anticipation of difficulties with folding these two offices together in larger groups where the work load might well intimidate the local officer, we're suggesting that reporting deputies for each branch be employed. The Kingdom offices here were joined a few years back, and this seems to be a logical evolution of that trend. So far, complaints have been pretty minimal, as I understand it.

As for what they should *do*, well, any combination of education, organization, and enthusiasm in the promotion of the Arts and Sciences would pretty much fill the bill (sort of what you'd want out of your ideal Teacher in the Real World).

Éowyn, I like the idea of a national symposium, perhaps along the lines of the Heraldic Symposium already in place.

—Ædward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

We are beginning to seriously plot something like that for the dance and music geeks. Maybe we could expand it? Hmmm...

—Keilyn FitzWarin [Atlantia]

Éowyn mentions that she would love to see an A&S Symposium.... Look to the skies—it's happening even now. According to the recent Board meeting in Carolingia, the Society Mistress of A&S is working pretty seriously on this idea. I don't know if it'll work (getting enough people there to get a sufficient "critical mass" on any given subject may be kinda hard), but it's a worthy experiment...

—Justin du Coeur [East]

DISTILLING FRUSTRATION

At the recent war between Trimaris and Ansteorra I witnessed a situation where a gentleman from another Kingdom entered a drink he had distilled himself in the Art/Sci competition and was disqualified due to the U.S. laws against distillation. He was quite upset, didn't seem to be aware of the laws, and was very vocal about his opinions concerning being disqualified. He stated that individuals are allowed to distill a set number of gallons for private use. Having come from Tennessee with older relatives who distilled (quite illegally) for their own use (okay, also for some "friends"), I grew up knowing the the "rev'noo'ers" would arrest anyone found to be distilling for any reason and in any amount. I have also read that a set number of gallons of beer or wine per adult per household may be produced if the residence is not in a dry county. Is distilling allowed in other Kingdoms? Am I mistaken about the laws concerning distillation?

—Elfwyn de Barfleur [Trimaris]

I called Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and asked! The guy wanted to know what kind of drink it was, and I said I didn't know any more than that it was distilled. He said they

did issue permits for wines, but anything else was illegal.

I failed to ask him to send me exact wording. Is there a reader who can quote us the federal prohibition on distillation? What's the deal on wine with a permit, are they talking about brandy? What's the deal on mead?

Is there a special permit available to distill a period recipe (some Black Plague cure or something)?

Is distilling allowed in Canada or Australia?

—ælflaED

KINGDOM-LEVEL STOCK CLERK

Every kingdom has publications of its own. Examples that spring to mind are the kingdom laws, the scroll words for awards, the rules for various arts and sciences competitions, a herald's handbook, the special fighting rules and conventions for the kingdom, etc.

Does your kingdom have a central place to get publications, or are they handled by each office? If the former, how is it managed and what does it carry? If the latter, how is the money handled, if I may be so bold? Of either method: how well does the system work?

—Eowyn Amberdrake [Caid]

KINGDOM DIFFERENCES

A gentleman visited our Crown from Ansteorra. I was blown away when he said, "Wow! I've never seen indoor fighting before!"

—Garlanda de Stanas [Middle]

Regional differences are part of what makes the SCA fun. Just as when we mundanely travel we do not expect it "to be the same as home," we shouldn't expect it to be the same in the SCA. There are a few "regional evangelists" running around but they can often be ignored.

—Lady Teresa Christina Berconi [Meridies]¹

I am born and bred Midrealm, and by great good fortune, a citizen of Calontir since its childhood. Many of Calontir's unique characteristics have been intentionally engineered in response to things we saw or heard of in other kingdoms. We are a kit, a work-in-progress, and we know it. If our songs and comradeship are our wine, the respect of the rest of the Society is our bread.

Stories from other kingdoms tend to disappoint me. In the West, feasts are uncommon. The Middle still has no fighting Order below Knight, and too few of those. Would-be peers court Kings with marijuana and cocaine, elsewhere.

Perhaps growing up in a utopian society I'm just hopelessly naive.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

¹ My SCA name is Lady Teresa Christina Berconi and I have been in for about 10 years. I am a water bearer and a kitchen drudge. My interests include simple costuming, water bearing, kitchen work (okay, gossip) and dog training. I have trained my dog to be a water bearer and am in the process of training him to run messages from the lists table to the field herald.

TRAVEL

When I started, events were generally six hours away, sometimes three, less often local. Six hour drives became the norm. This is great for me now; living in the center of Calontir, it's about six hours to any border. In some regions a six hour drive is halfway there, others think six hours is too long to get to Pennsic.

For me, Pennsic is seventeen hours, Estrella is at least twenty-four, Jubilee is nine, al-Barran fourteen (where I hope to attend some event in the coming year).

These days, the difficult events to want to go to in Calontir are those in the struggling new groups located off the Interstate Highway system. It's all just a matter of what we learn to expect.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

Bernard de Barfleur mentions a 4-5 hour limit on Trimaris travel—there's an old joke (?!?) in Atlantia that is twice as far from North to South as from South to North. Folks from Southern Atlantia used to (still?) have the feeling that they're the only ones who travel. Still, staying close to home makes sense when you realize that from where I live a two-three hour trip will take me from my Barony to five other baronies and five shires in Atlantia alone! Add to that at least one East Kingdom Barony and several shires and it becomes a real dilemma of not "is there something to do" but which thing to do.

—Siobhan O'Riordan [Atlantia]

CHILDREN

Ok, Ok. For all you people who hate kids at events, I know of something much worse: pets. Specifically: Boogie (she definitely needs a more period sounding name). She's a 14 pound mutt/weiner dog who is better known in the kingdom than I am, and I'm a peer! Why you ask? Because her bark has the volume of a cannon and the pitch of a siren when it's on the upswing. Yes, she's one of those horrible yappy little dogs who can jump about six feet in the air and has a little "accident" every time someone she likes comes over. Some parents have to leave court when their kid cries; I have to get up when mine barks.¹

I'm not a bad owner. She stays on a leash and has plenty of water. But somehow, all anyone ever says to me is that I'm going to make a terrible parent. It's rough for pet owners. You can't send Junior to the playground. Last time I asked, the autocrat wouldn't even consider selling me a banquet ticket for the pup. It's even hard to find crash space. Most people are understanding of children. It's only a best friend who keeps inviting you and your "family" when the kid chews up their favorite pumps, or their carpet, or even costume patterns.

¹ Persona note: Boogie (pronounced "Boo-jee") is an 11th century purebred Irish wolf-hound. She was the first dog to reach the continent by paddling across the English channel. From there she traveled all over the world with a band of gypsies. Along the way she got in trouble with anything on four legs. Come to Caid, and she'll tell you all her persona stories. They're generally far fetched and you can't understand a word she says, but that doesn't stop her from telling them.

Let's not talk about drinking out of the toilet or digging holes in the pavilion. And somehow we got invited back to my buddy's house even after he found puppy poopoo in his bathtub. Dressing up your child in cute costumes is sweet and a good example for others to follow. Putting your pooch in a surcoat complete with Daddy's badge, a coif (with ear holes), and a German pizza hat is sickening. But I'm out of control when it comes to the mutt.

So all of you in the knowne world who keep bitching about all these children, just be thankful—you could be living in Caid with Boogie and her Mama.

—Angela of Rosebury [Caid]

PROVINCES OR BIG SHIRES

I have twice now lived in shires with a disproportionately high number of Peers and above-average energy levels. Other people teased us about becoming a barony. Being experienced and sensibly lazy we saw no need.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

The East has the Crown Province of Østgardr, and Atlantia had, until a few years ago, the City-State of Marinus, which was essentially the same as a Province. Marinus decided a few years back to convert to a Barony, and you'll have to ask them whether they're glad they did.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

Lady Carmella asks the eternal question—How do groups pick a Baron and Baroness without offending one another? The answer is sometimes you can't. It depends entirely on the people involved.

Even in a peaceful and uneventful selection process there are inevitable hard feelings from those who do not get what they believe they deserve. It comes down to this—people generally do not have an accurate perception of how other people view them. It is a big ego adjustment to admit that folks wouldn't choose you as the best leader for the group. An amazingly large number of people believe not only that they would be great as a Baron or Baroness but that other folks think so too. Unfortunately too frequently this is far from the truth.

The biggest problem with the whole thing is that you can never know if a correct choice is made when a Baron(ess) is being selected. It's worse than Crown tourney, because you can effect the outcome, you just can't know if it was the right choice until later. Time is the only thing that tells.

—Siobhan O'Riordain [Atlantia]

ON BEING A BARON OR BARONESS

This topic really speaks to me, so I figured I'd add my version of the job description or as I have been heard to call them the **Contractual Obligations**.

1. This is a job—it is an honor to be selected, but it is still a job.
2. The only authority that comes with the job is that

respect which you earn from the people of your barony.

3. There are only two specific duties assigned to this job: giving baronial level awards, and advising and serving your king and queen.
4. Despite this, everyone has expectations of what it is you are supposed to be doing. No one will tell you what these are unless a) you ask or b) you didn't do them.
5. Several activities, while optional, are highly recommended:
 - * Picking up the slack,
 - * Covering for people,
 - * Refereeing disputes,
 - * Greeting new people,
 - * Rumor Control,
 - * Caring for or making baronial regalia,
 - * Encouraging barony members' activities,
 - * Integrating new and fringe members,
 - * Making recommendations for kingdom awards,
 - * Shoulder to cry on,
 - * Sounding board,
 - * Voice of Reason.
6. The following, though not guaranteed to happen, are likely:
 - * You will have to process with the royalty,
 - * You will have to attend "official" things,
 - * You will have to sit in court,
 - * You will have to sit at high table,
 - * Any or all of these will be scheduled opposite something you'd rather be doing, especially at the war.
7. When interacting with people as Baron(ess):
 - * Your opinion is now taken as the barony's,
 - * People will judge your group by you,
 - * Barony events are now "yours"—you are the host,
 - * The little things you do will have a greater positive or negative effect,
 - * Despite your best efforts not everyone will be happy.
8. The following compensation is offered:
 - * You get to wear a coronet,
 - * You have a title,
 - * People bow to you,
 - * You get to sit at high table,
 - * You can actually hear court,
 - * You get to recognize the good things that your people are doing.

People will bring you their problems, their frustrations and their joys. Many of your own projects will have to be put on hold. There is a great capacity, however, to do good things. If you can still have some fun as well then "it is good to be Baroness."

—Siobhan O'Riordan, Baroness of Lochmere [Atlantia]

A couple of explanations are in order here, for this treatise on landed Baronies to unfold properly: 1) I was founding baron of the Barony of Bryn Madoc (Athens, GA), and served as Baron until 1989 (not quite nine years); 2) as Kingdom Seneschal of Meridies, I have three petitions for baronial status on my desk right now.

First things first: Bryn Madoc was formed in the summer of 1976; in the Fall of 1980, we became a barony. In choosing the baron and baroness, a polling of the populace was held, and the resulting recommendation was made to the Crown. My Lady (Mistress Margala of Dovedale) and I sat the Baronial seats for nearly nine years. In my case, much of how I conducted myself as Baron was patterned on how I had performed as Seneschal of the group before we became a barony. Because there needed to be a definition of how the Baronial spheres would operate in concert with the function of the baronial officers, having a "good fit" was crucial, especially with regard to the office of Seneschal. This meant treading a fine line as local nobility, supporter of the agendas of the local officers, and serving as the representative of the Crown. If you've ever seen the Chinese acrobats who attempt to keep a large number of plates spinning atop wands simultaneously, you have some idea of the talents involved.

Along the way, there were numerous opportunities for misreading situations, hurting feelings, missing signals, and just plain old dropping the ball. To this point, I really count my time spent as Landed Baron as being some of the very best time I've spent in the SCA.

At the same time, I've been on opposite sides of a debate for some years with a dear friend who asserted for a number of years that there is (or should be) a natural progression of a group, given requisite growth, from shire to barony. I don't think that all shires should aspire to baronial status. For one thing, at least in Meridies, baronies seem to act as magnets for conflict (I'm not sure of cause-and-effect here...when I am, I'll tell you all how much the serum will cost...). In the past, it has seemed that the time at which a barony was at its most vulnerable was at the moment in which it sought to change Baron/ess. With a couple of these changes in the wind in Meridies, it seems as though this problem may be a thing of the past (at least, so the Kingdom Seneschal hopes...).

Still, we have three groups that want to make the leap. I've spoken with the leadership in all three groups extensively, and expect to do so a lot more in the future. I've tried to express the notion that the dynamics in a Barony are unique, that it's not just a case of "Shire with a Hyperactive Thyroid." If they become Baronies, they will gain a full appreciation of this for themselves, but this, like so much else in the SCA, cannot be adequately explained/prepared for. This is something (like wearing the Crown, or holding Kingdom Office, or sitting on the Board) which must be *done* to be fully appreciated.

—Ædward of Glastonburgh, Baron Bryn Madoc [Meridies]

I served as the Baron of Lochmere, Atlantia, for something over one year. My term of appointment was rudely terminated by the Great Uncle when I was directed to take my mundane self to the east coast of North Carolina (sorry for this craven desertion, Siobhan). Although my tenure was short, my personal feelings on the role of the "office," as seen from both inside and outside, were amply reinforced.

Of paramount importance is the fact that the baron and baroness (hereafter known simply as the B&B) provide the overall direction and impetus for the group. This can

sometimes be quite a feat as they have no real administrative "power" therein. I set the word "power" out as it may vary *greatly* from barony to barony. A more precise way to put this might be that, in other than those things specifically set out by the Crown, the B&B can only do what the local populace lets them do. When the B&B are capable and/or well liked (and/or thoroughly Machiavellian) this can be quite a lot. For a rather benign example, when the words "Let's put together a local scriptorium and spend a lot of time and effort doing up all the outstanding scrolls for the Barony!" come from the B&B they have a lot more weight than those same words issuing from the mouth of Lord Newguy von Somebody...or even from the seneschal. I have no doubt that many (most???) of you can cite any number of more extreme examples.

The B&B also become the great arbitrators and fence patchers when it comes to conflicts both internal and external to the group. Good judgement, common sense and patience (all hopefully in at least an adequate supply) will normally see things through here. Any hurt feelings or bruised egos that may linger on after the resolution of a crisis may then offer themselves up for the application of even more benign tools.

It's a great job; you can give awards, speak with the Crown's voice, sit in a nice chair (sometimes) and get to wear the surcoat with the big target on it while on the field. However, stay clear if you have difficulty in coping with problems—sometimes your own but mostly those of others.

—Tryggi Grabardr, former Baron of Lochmere [Atlantia]

There is nothing in the SCA—not fighting, not arts, not dancing, not *anything*—as fun, as exhilarating, and as absolutely exhausting as ruling a barony with everyone behind you. (We can't compare it to being the Crown, but we suspect there's never been a Crown with everyone behind them.)

We don't know this from experience, but we firmly believe that there is nothing as depressing and as draining as ruling without the populace's support.

We've also lived under several rulers. It is much more fun to live under an active ruler whom we all support than to fight over who should have it. King Solomon himself could not have ruled effectively under those conditions.

The Baron and Baroness are living banners—symbols for the group to flourish with pride. They must try to be worthy of that pride. They must also be willing to be the Baron and Baroness for everyone—including the people they can't stand.

A large part of the job is turning to the king to say, "Dammit, support our people," and then turning back to the people to say, "Dammit, support our King."¹ Note that no Crown ever considered that a violation of fealty—it is a requirement of fealty. Also note—do it in private.

The job of Baron and Baroness gives exactly what we all say we want—and probably don't. It carries, moment by moment, exactly as much power, influence, and authority as people want to give you, and not one iota more. You can give awards—if the Crown approves. You can choose officers—if

the Kingdom officers trust you. You can set direction—if anyone cares to follow. And you cannot do a thing unless people support it. But if you do have their support, you can do anything you want to, virtually untouched by laws and bureaucracy. (Indeed, part of the job is to break the rules when the rules are getting in the way of legitimate goals.)

—Robin of Gilwell, Former Baron of the Steppes [Ansteorra]

TIME LIMITS ON BARONS

Although I wasn't a ruling baroness long enough to get tired of the job (mundane employment forcing a move), I think that the formalized time limit for all baronies is counterproductive. The actual advantage of barons is the continuity they provide. Kings and princes come and go. Baronial officers come and go. But the people of the barony can keep the identity and sense of continuity through the influence of a good baron/ess. Baron/esses don't have a whole heck of a lot of "power," regardless of what some people seem to think. However, if they are there long enough to settle in, they can have tremendous influence. Ædward of Glastonburgh had the right idea. Take it on a case by case basis and leave the ones doing well alone. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

—Ferelith MacDonald [Atenveldt]²

I started in the Barony of Jararvellir (Madison, Wisconsin) in January of 1974. It was one of the old first-group-in-a-state-gets-to-be-a-barony situations. The Baron left after several years, but the original Baroness, Asdis Stefansdottir, served (with a couple of Vicars) from 1971 until 1992. The Barony is apparently doing well under its second Baron and Baroness.

In Calontir, no founding Baronage still serve and terms have voluntarily shortened to about three years. Successors are interviewed by the Crown, written comments collected, and the local populace polled, but the final decision rests with the Crown. Results have been mixed.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

Bish mentions that the change to term limits in Atlantia was done with less grace than might have been possible. I am curious. Is there a graceful way to fire long-standing Territorial Barons and Baronesses?

—Siobhan O'Riordain [Atlantia]

A note on time limits for landed: Yes, it might help keep out the pests. It would also create periodic havoc in one barony who've been perfectly happy with their Baroness for a dozen years or more.

—Ædward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

We used to believe that we couldn't find a way more mundane, more political, and more divisive than term limits, but I suspect that "votes of confidence" are worse.

¹ No, we're not slighting the queen. Our queens always supported our barony and our barony always supported our queen.

² Ferelith is the Baroness Loch Salann, founding baroness of the group in Salt Lake City, Utah.

That system would require all members of the barony to consider tossing them out at all times. The ideal barony is rallying around their baron and baroness, not deciding whether to toss them out. The second-best, or even seventh-best, candidate with a united barony is far better than the best candidate with a precisely measured 51% of the group. Don't worry—when they have to be removed, it will be clear to everyone. (Note—we believe that they should not be removed unless the barony is nearly unanimously against them, when a petition or delegation to the Crown will work just fine. Indeed, we can't imagine a baron not resigning upon seeing the petition.)

—Robin of Gilwell [Ansteorra]

Our Baron and Baroness are the second of this barony, and are a textbook example against term limits. They have worn the coronets for five years now, and get better all the time. They strive to put a little theatre into courts, they are both artists, and the Baron was knighted last year. They are not well liked; they are LOVED. (They are also terminally cute and just SO romantic together, so that probably adds to the aura.) If they were to step down of their own accord, EVERYBODY would be sorry, and whoever followed them would have enormous shoes to fill. If they were forced to step down, everybody would be MAD.

—Alexis MacAlister [Middle]¹

Ineffective barons can be removed. It has been done before in the past and will probably be done again in the future. The mechanism is there, it just takes effort from the group involved. Why should a barony that has a good baron have to lose that person in a specified amount of time simply because a group with a poor baron does not have the backbone to remove them?

—Teresa Berconi [Meridies]

I'm all in favor of time limits, though I think long ones (three to five years) would be appropriate. The founding baroness of the group where I live had burned out and her influence was almost wholly negative, yet she couldn't let go, and finally had to be fired by the Crown. She left the SCA and I don't think she'll be back. If she had stepped down at the five-year point rather than the eleven-year point, I think she wouldn't have felt so much pressure to perform, or got so defensive when she knew she wasn't up to the job any longer. I think *not* having time limits hurt her. I have seen other cases where the baron or baroness wasn't doing any harm, but neither were they very active nor were they doing very much good. As far as losing a good person, well, I think any good and dedicated person will stick around and be productive whether they're wearing the tin hat or not. Let them have

multiple terms if they want, just don't let them be consecutive. Sooner or later, every barony will have someone that will want to hang on much longer than they should. In these cases, someone is bound to be hurt.

—Kirk FitzDavid [Calontir]

MERCHANTS

As a merchant I am making my living, but I've lost a lot of the fun. I love my work, however I hate to sell it. I spend all day in a usually hot tent dealing with all (and I mean all) the true weirdos at an event. All weirdos go shopping for trapped victims who have to be polite. The worst part is when my friends come back and tell me all that I have missed while I talked to weirdos.

Most people I meet at my booth are not weird. They're good folks. Some offer drink or bring news of the day. Most know my name and my family. I only remember a few names as I see most everyone at an event. I do remember faces and often can place what they purchased from me years ago, usually to their amusement.

The biggest drawback about being a merchant is I can't go to any event and not be asked about my goods, how I make them or what I sell. It's not a game, nor is it much fun any more, it's a lot of work. This is not to say I don't ever have fun. I get a day of fighting at Pennsic. I get to meet old friends and party some, though I'd rather sleep more now. I'm getting older, I guess.

I've been around almost twenty years now. It took sixteen years to be recognized as a peer. I feel it is a hindrance to one's recognition if one is a merchant.

About my peerage—I am an armorer by trade and I don't claim to be a master armorer by a long shot, so I don't like or use "master" and "armorer" together. I hope I received my Laurel for who I am and not that I can make a living at what I do. There are a lot of people who make a living selling junk. I hope that I have a lot of qualities from your good-peer list and few or none of the bad list traits, and if I do I hope someone will tell me.

It is more important to look at what someone is rather than how well someone can sew or make armor. I see too many Laurels who truly think they are masters of their craft. There are some, but not many. We lose many good members—those who have the qualities we strive to honor—because we don't recognize the person as much as we look at the quality of what they make. The true peers should not be those strong, organized or crafty, but those truly honorable and guiding persons.

—Johan Blau [Outlands]²

If you like this column and you don't subscribe to *Compleat Anachronist*, CA # 63 recently came out. It is entitled "Medieval Merchants and Artisans" and is dedicated

¹ I am Mistress Alexis MacAlister. I received my Laurel for Fibre Arts on October 12, 1991 from David and Tangwystyl at their last court (one day before my 35th birthday! What a present!). I was asked to be considered to take the office of Kingdom MoA...and stepped into that job January 18th, 1992. This last year has been exciting, awe-inspiring and humbling for me. It has been a reinforcement of the old adage, "The more you know, the more you discover you don't know." I've been in the SCA since July 1981. Pennsic X was my second event. I hold our kingdom arts award (for dance) and the service award (for autocrating and diplomacy) and our baronial arts and service awards. I have two dogs, and we are all owned by a cat.

² Master Johan has been in the Society since he was a young teen. He has recently moved to Fontaine dans Sable (the northwest corner of New Mexico) from al-Baran. He refers to people knowing his family; his mother is a laurel and a pelican, and he has two brothers, both knights. He received his award of arms in 1977, and subsequently received awards for chivalry, arts and service.

"To all the merchants and artisans who lend so much color, ambience, and support to SCA events." The author is Lady Catriona MacPherson, who lives in whichever barony Glendale, Arizona is in. (Sorry; didn't get an answer by the time I finished this issue.) Check the stock clerk order form in any recent T.I. to find out how to order a copy.

—ÆlflaED

and speaking of T.I.,

Your sale of the *Tournaments Illuminated* reminded me of an idea—why not a "Best of T.I." publication from the Stock Clerk? I think it would complement the *Known World Handbook*.

—Aethelthryth of Acleah [Caid]

PEERAGE

The perfect peerage candidate should know that there is no right way or wrong way, only ways that do and do not work, and that this will vary from individual to individual. I was taught years ago, "There are Dukes who fight wrong." If I could come up with much more than this, I would be the perfect peer myself, rather than helping create a fictitious one.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

The perfect peer has already been described—read Castiglione's "The Courtier."

—Angela of Rosebury [Caid]

I have a mundane friend who knows enough about the SCA to be able to ask intelligent questions, and so we were talking about awards when he asked "so why would someone want to be a Peer?"

I couldn't answer him. The superficial reasons (regalia, respect, title) went through my head, but I couldn't help but think of the responsibilities as well, and if it's true that kings only recognize peers, not make them, then why should one accept the regalia and responsibility if one is already a peer?

Is it one's responsibility to the Society? Is it wrong to refuse?

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

MULTIPLE PEERAGE

Multipeers: Kinda sounds like a Transformer toy, or such of that ilk...

I know from past discussions that creating multipeers is tougher in Meridies simply because the notion of service has to pass through the official extra filter of "doing what's already expected of a Peer of the Realm." This seems to be a particularly tough issue in the Pelicanate.

—Æward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

To Kirk FitzDavid: One Caidan knight has received a Laurel—Sir Charles of Dublin was given a Laurel for Bardic Arts (secondary in numismatics). This is fairly recent. Two Laurels of Caid were later made Knights—Master Brion Thornbird and Master Tryggyi Halftrollson. But you are correct that Laurel/Knight appears to be the hardest

combination of Peerages to achieve in Caid. Pelican/Laurel appears to be most common for multiple peerage.

—Eowyn Amberdrake [Caid]

THE ORDER OF THE PELICAN

I'll be crucified for this, I'm sure, but I've heard it said that the Order of the Pelican is little more than an ex-Great Officers' club. I can cite examples to prove that this is not true, but it does seem that only the Politically Correct Celebrities get rewarded for their work. (I feel thirsty already...)

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

Isn't that just like saying the knights are just all the good fighters.

In an ideal world (or in an SCA kingdom during a good season), the only people who are given major offices are those who are the most experienced, influential, respected, honest and trustworthy of that small group who are willing and able to perform the duties. Sometimes the only person who is willing and able isn't the most upstanding human around, but usually those who are kingdom officers are the top of the crop, just as those who win crown tournament are usually great fighters (if not always upstanding humans).

Knights can't help but look at people who are good enough to win tournaments, and Pelicans can't help but look at people who hold office and autocrat events. Just as it is possible to win a tournament *and* the disgust of everyone who watches all at the same time, it is possible for a person to take the gamble of holding an office or being responsible for a crucial event and do such a botch-job of it that people who would never have heard of them otherwise know them as incompetents. So whether we judge them to have done a good job or a bad one, they were "in the lists" to be considered for service by serving.

—ÆlflaED of Duckford [Outlands]

Let us now praise famous mental homes for loonies like me. Members of the Pel are, by and large, the people who have the skill to say the right thing to the right people at the right time to get things done or to help people see the proper road.

Yes, we hold offices and do the special tasks that are normally done by the noonoos who volunteer for the s**t details. I feel, though, that we focus our concern for the best interests of the group and channel our efforts into providing the "nudge" that will change the Society for the better further on down the road.

What is a Pelican? My feeling is that it is a person who can make the SCA work for other people and can get a charge out of doing it.

—William Blackfox [Ansteorra]

Éowyn is quite correct when she asserts that a big task facing Pelicans (and, for that matter, all Peers and other "Achievers") is the "reinventing" of your role in the SCA to keep it all fresh. I subscribe to the "Amoeba School," and send out a new pseudopod when interest in one area flags. *ThinkWell* has been one such "false foot." As for the role of

"leadership," I think that there are as many ways to define it as there are leaders. You can even "lead by following" (excuse my Zen); certainly the hardest part of when I quit being Baron Bryn Madoc was learning to keep my mouth shut and let those in the leadership positions lead.

—Ædward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

I am living proof that it is more difficult to become a Pelican than a Knight. I was made a Knight in my first three years in the Society. It took me 17 years to get a Pelican. Of course, I did have natural talent for swinging a mean stick. It took a while to get me to learn that screaming was not the best way to get things done in the Society. I like to think I earned my Pelican IN SPITE of serving as King. Seriously, in reality the three Orders of Peerage are equal—it is only the occasional insecurity we all drag around that makes them unequal.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

To answer Eowyn Amberdrake's question about what Pelicans should do after they get their award: I've been doing some of both. I still do a fair bit of "grunt work" such as moving tables for feasts, and clearing land for new sites (beware of Dons with chainsaws) but I'm also Deputy Society Marshal for Rapier Combat, and have overseen the growth of Rapier Combat from five kingdoms to nine, which I suppose qualifies as a "meta-project."

—Tivar Moondragon [Ansteorra]

The ORDER of the LAUREL

Pray allow me to correct what may be a common misconception about the Laurel in the Eastern Rite lands. It is true that more often the Laurel is given for excellence in one (or two) specific crafts than for the composite of crafts that the other kingdoms seem to recognize. But certainly it is given more than once in a given art or science. I believe that the "What else does he do?" question is asked out here too.

—Keilyn FitzWarin [Atlanta]

When asked what I got MY Laurel in, I always reply: "In not being pigeon-holed."

—Master Johannes the Black of the Athanor [Meridies]
(biographical information coming in Issue #14)

You and I had a nice chat at the last St. Golias Feastday about Icelandic law that I found very interesting.¹ When I started researching a Roman persona recently, I included the laws of her time. It has been fascinating and I never would have done this kind of research before our talk. To me, this is a good example of a "true" Laurel—you directed me to explore a subject that I would not have done. I have come across a few peers who seem to have an attitude and always seem to be criticizing. One almost caused me to walk away from the Society. But peers such as yourself, Mistress Monika, Mistress Mirhaxa and so many others who give

encouragement, advice and praise make up for those one or two jerks.

—Lady Richenza le Wydu [Outlands]

This seems a good place to acknowledge and apologize for a lack of control and a violation of my own editorial policy. In response to something I chose not to include in Issue #12, I referred to the practices of a certain household as lowlife something-or-other. While I knew what provoked me, none of the readers did. (Maybe one did.) I should have vented more privately, if at all.

Sometimes without even trying, one can set a good example, inspire someone, bring honor to herself and perhaps enhance someone's view of the peerage (or whatever group) in general. Lady Richenza was very kind to let me know that I had been a good influence on her life. Had she not written that note, I would never have known that my blabbering on about something I had just learned had been useful to her. By expressing her appreciation, she gave me a great gift.

Sometimes, without trying, much good can be undone. From some people's point of view I'm helpful and supportive. Others feel I'm always criticizing. I wish I had never criticized except in a useful, non-personal, productive, encouraging, face-saving way. I'm not proud of the times I've failed to be as noble and virtuous as I think I should be. I am probably not proud enough of the times I have succeeded.

Please find the opportunity to do for someone else what Lady Richenza did for me. Let someone know of something good they taught you, showed you, gave you. Thank them again (or for the first time). I think more good will come of it than you might imagine.

—Ælflæd of Duckford [Outlands]

"US AND THEM"

I was moved by Nykolette's essay on "us & them" and unfortunately have to agree with her. There have been times when "they" have almost spoiled the game for me. However, I'm sure I'm someone else's "them" as is Nykolette. The only answer is "To thine own self be true" and this too shall pass.

—Elinor du Ponte [Outlands]

CAMPAIGNING for PEERAGE

Hope Chests: No peer I know of hands out regalia ahead of time. They do seem to pass chains and medallions to new peers of the proper variety. A "hope chest" is a pretty odd thing to my mind, though I do know a couple of people who have them. If I had one, I would probably start brooding on it, and start thinking I "deserved" a peerage. I may be reasonably close in all of the three areas (fighting, service, and science), but I can also say I haven't earned any of them yet and am doing my best not to think about them too much. I particularly don't want to do any campaigning.

—Kirk FitzDavid [Calontir]

¹ From a February letter from Richenza to Ælflæd

RELATIONSHIP OF KNIGHT TO SQUIRE, ETC.

On the whole, I agree with Conor's viewpoint (in #9) regarding the duties of peers to students [being visible, teaching, providing the opportunity to serve, being an example to follow). I would like to toss out one additional point for discussion which a friend and I have been arguing for a while now.

The issue is motivation of students by peers/teachers. (Aside—I will use teachers here, because not all teachers are peers...) Is it the responsibility of the teacher to motivate the student? If so, how much? Should the teacher provide incentives (beyond "getting better at your craft") or rewards? Are there times when this is particularly useful, such as when the student seems to have hit a plateau of skill, or has not yet gotten good enough to consistently experience joy or fulfillment in the "doing"?? (Not that anyone experiences joy in the doing *all* the time!!) Duke Gyrrth makes an excellent point about learning more from losing fights, and it certainly holds true for the arts as well (service is a fuzzy question on this one, but there are probably comparable situations), but there are times when one has lost too many comparable fights. Are there times when outside motivation is harmful? Are there particularly good (or bad) ways to motivate students in this sort of situation (one-on-one, both competent adults)? Are there motivations which work particularly well for one or the other branches of Society activities (martial arts, arts & sciences, service)? What have people in other areas tried (successfully or not)?

Anyhow, we have been wondering how to provide the occasional kick in the pants for motivation, at the time when the interest is still there but the immediate enthusiasm for *practice* is flagging (i.e. to keep people from giving up).

....

[and on campaigning:] Hm. How to say this delicately? I do not mean this to sound as snarky as it will probably come out, but I have to disagree almost entirely with Viscountess Tatiana's last paragraph in Issue #4 p. 12, and therefore to some extent with Mistress Ælflaed (same issue & page). I think it *should* be one of the responsibilities of peers to point non-peers in the right direction. I agree that advice should not be phrased as "If you do this, you will get the award," but I also do not believe that non-peers should be required to be psychic about what the order is looking for. (This assumes that "what the order is looking for" is not commonly known beyond the descriptions in Corpora/Kingdom Law, or that there are conflicting reports/thoughts/ideas as to "what the order is looking for." Certes, that is the case in Atlantia, and apparently elsewhere—witness our discussions here! There may be kingdoms where the requirements are more obvious—I do not know.)

Perhaps it is the case that this sort of advice ("I think the Laurels would like you better if you stop picking your nose during court") will lead to Chameleon-ism, but perhaps the candidate will also realize that it (not picking your nose in court) is a good idea, or will do it (or, in this example not do it) until it becomes a habit. I never believed I would be able

to get up early in the morning on a regular basis—now I am up at 6:30 nearly every day.

I do not know of very many peerages that have been given out under the circumstances suggested—to persons who behaved themselves long enough to get the goodie and then reverted to their previous un-Peer-like behaviour. I confess there are some peerages I believe were given while the person was still "lacking in those other qualities that define a peer" (or at least lacking some), and I know some people who are in the process of trying to reform somewhat (both pre-and post-elevation to the peerage). As Duchess Melisande has said, does the motivation *really* matter, if good things are being done? I would not usually argue the end justifying the means, but in this case, it seems everybody wins. And if Johnny has stopped picking his nose for a year and a half, that's a year and a half we didn't have to watch him do it in court, eh? At this point I'll sign off on this particular topic, as any more would be belaboring a point made well by Duke Artan and Countess Ælflaed in #2 p.12.

Now that that's out of the way...I think I agree with what I think the point of Viscountess Tatiana's statement is (if that's not too much thinking in one sentence) but I think her statement was a little harsh. I agree that sour grapes can be a symptom of a personality flaw. Likewise, overwhelmingly campaigning for your friends to join the order could be too.... Given, many of us agree that obvious whining is icky (see Ælflaed's list from #2). Sometimes people do get over sour grapes and jealousy and like that, or learn to internalize it. Should the fact that they did feel that way at one point be held against them? (See the discussion on Long Memories for more on this.)

—Keilyn FitzWarin [Atlantia]

Do you get up at 6:30 because a peer told you to? (You didn't explain it, but my guess is it's something you figured out on your own.)

We *never* say "Johnny" in the Outlands for a hypothetical peerage candidate; we always say "Joe Bob." Let us say that Joe Bob, on the advice of a peer he admired, struggled to cease his comfortable, life-long nosepicking. He felt his nose tickle but, against his nature, he resisted for a year and a half. During that time he was knighted. Maybe he got another couple of awards for encouragement from peers who were in positions to notice his progress and encourage it. After a while he figures "Hey, I'm a knight. I can beat up everybody in the kingdom on a good day. I can pick my nose if I want to." Well, two years ago he was a non-peer who picked his nose. Now he's a knight who does it and it reflects on the order of chivalry and the whole kingdom. We're really talking about (or, rather, not talking about) something worse than nose picking. Consider the scenario with "unchivalrous conduct" or "lying" or "disrespect for the Crown" or Something Bad in there.

About the encouragement and rewarding stuff, I'm looking forward to the responses from the *many* peers with students out there. My preliminary guess is that the relationships are as different as marriages or best-friendships. Some couples (of whatever sort) have the need to see each other nearly constantly, to tell each other everything, and hardly have the

desire to be with other people for any reason. To others, that would seem stifling and unnatural. Some individuals need constant strokes and verbal approval, and some prefer to be left alone. If I were to say "It's the duty of a wife to choose her husband's clothes and lay them out and make a list of his appointments for the day, and pack his lunch and put a love letter in his shoe," some people might say "Sounds good to me," and others would be appalled. Probably the range is even broader with students and teachers.

I have two disturbing memories of complaints made in general to/about the laurels in my barony. Both happened a long time ago. A person was upset that the laurels hadn't critiqued her costumes and told her sooner that they were no damned good (paraphrase, certainly; paramemory perhaps). Another said we weren't doing our jobs as laurels because we hadn't told the person about the existence of Dover books. Are we to be resources or missionaries? I still think gumption is good and initiative is invaluable.

—Ælfæd of Duckford [Outlands]

I have an article on Squiredom in the *Known World Handbook* which still applies. For myself, I will not take a squire, or apprentice (no protégés yet), unless I believe them fully capable of peerage, and I tell them so. I promise not to shame them and they promise not to shame me. I weave their belt and when they are elevated they are expected to pass that belt on to their first student.

My students have made me very happy, and have indirectly challenged me to do better myself.

I choose very carefully, observing for as much as two years before asking. I have a favorite quote from Ben Franklin on the subject: THERE NEVER WAS A GOOD KNIFE MADE OF BAD STEEL.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

FRIENDSHIP (AND PEERAGE)

We can all think of situations where complete honesty would not be courteous. One of the benefits of Calontir's occasional Peers Retreat is the exercise of courtesies within and between the Orders. Playing nice allows us to get through difficult discussions, awkward candidates, and long lives locked in the same cages.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

PEERAGE AND FEALTY

(And Back Atcha, Fair Editor!!!!)¹

I take up the gauntlet dropped at my feet by the gentle Mistress Ælfæd, and respond by pointing out that people will always use statutory inequities to hide behind as just cause for their prejudice. It was just this premise that underpinned the Civil Rights movement of the '50's and '60's. As for the notion of "forcing" someone to swear fealty, well, of course, we could suspend that requirement for all Peerages (including the Knights). We could also come up with some compromise

affirmation for those whose religious or philosophical convictions preclude the swearing of oaths. Is this intellectually dishonest? Perhaps. Is it at least consistent with itself? I think it comes closer than what we have now. All it takes is a little mental flexibility. As a current popular song suggests, "Free your minds, the rest will follow...." And yes, I fully expect this suggestion to come back and haunt me when somebody finds one of my change-resistant buttons and pushes it.....

As for the actual mechanics of swearing, I agree with Lars that the Fealty is to the Crown, not necessarily the organic cushion on which it sits. By couching my oath in those terms, it enables me to take gentle issue with a Sovereign or Consort whose well-meaning action could be, in my opinion, bad for the kingdom. In fact, that's the only way I know that I could pledge fealty as Kingdom Seneschal; certainly I would otherwise feel forsaken if I had to take a policy stand against a Monarch over an issue of Societal governance. Am I being relatively clear here?

—Ælfæd of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

When I was first made a peer, I was eager to swear fealty to the king and queen—the only reason I didn't do it then and there was that, as a non-fighting peer, I wasn't offered the opportunity. I swore fealty—and meant it—for the next several years. Then I began to burn out, and had some bad experiences that made me feel that the monarchs weren't keeping their side of the bargain. So I stopped. *But I didn't stop doing the things for which I was made a peer.* I continued to serve my kingdom, as best I could, even though I was (and still am) deeply troubled about the value of awards in the Society.

More recently, I became editor of T.I. I put fifteen to twenty hours a week into serving the Society. I don't think it would be appropriate for me to swear fealty—I serve the entire Society, not just the East Kingdom. I can think of situations in which fealty to the monarchs of my kingdom could conflict with my responsibility to the Society as a whole.

My point is this: Fealty does not make the peer. Service makes the peer. Different people may choose to serve in different ways. Some may serve best by their unwavering devotion to their king and queen; some may serve best as gadflies and outsiders. Many who do not wish to swear fealty nonetheless give the Society their time, wisdom, and talents. Do we want to place more value on a form of words than on service and honesty?

—Alys Gardener [Atlantia]²

Bish, my fealty requires me to tell my king when he's screwing up. And that bond of fealty requires him to stop and listen. He doesn't just jerk me around by my chain; I jerk

² I am Mistress Alys Gardener, O.L. (1985). I joined the Society in 1977, fresh out of high school and full of idealism. I was lucky enough to fall into the company of several of the gentles whose words and wisdom regularly grace the pages of this newsletter, and who should not be held responsible for my crankiness on the subject of the peerage. I've been one or another kind of officer about half the time I've been in the Society. For the past several years, I've been a "conscientious objector" to the awards system—I don't answer (or even get) polling letters, and I stay away from order meetings. [Editor's note: Mistress Alys has the distinction of having been the 100th *TW* subscriber. I shall ever think of her fondly for that.—ælfædED]

¹ Follows on "Here's one to chew on..." and "Spitooie!" page 13 of ThinkWell #12.

him back!

Ælfþæd, my fealty is part of my knighthood. I did have an option about whether to swear. It was a viable option, but I didn't take it. My fealty has lost no value; my commitment is to the Crown and Kingdom of Ansteorra, without regard to who the king and queen are. My best is all I can do.

Tule, I feel that you acted within your rights. Fealty is a *contract*, it requires both parties to fulfill obligations. If one is not fulfilling his obligations, the other has a right to call him back into line, or to declare the agreement broken and void. No contract is worth more than the available enforcement mechanisms.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

Much more on Fealty will appear in Issue #14.

THE DREAM

Good writing means communicating your meaning. If the ideas are communicated equally well, then the fewer words the better. Good writing means choosing the correct words and the correct number of words to communicate your meaning clearly.

The number of words devoted to The Dream on these pages is clear proof that *The Dream* is inadequate to express a clear meaning.

—Conor mac Cineide [Ansteorra]

Having read many opinions on the use of this term over the last few issues, *I still hate it!* But I can now see the passion and feeling some people put into its use. Perhaps if I had seen *those* people's use of "the Dream" instead of the casual, smarmy way I had seen it previously, my thoughts would be different.

I did like reading about Carmela's magic moment in #12. I had the pleasure of seeing Arlof and Hilary on the throne a bit at last year's Pennsic. They obviously put a good deal of time and thought into what they did as King and Queen, at least visually. I went to one of their courts and enjoyed myself. Fun, and good theatre!

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

Foggy mornings and campfires don't "do it" for me—the start of a Pennsic field battle, with 1000+ on each side, and me up front with a scutum, is when I get that strange feeling. It's like I'm part of some huge living thing. I'm not in the SCA to get that feeling, it's only a bonus when I do. Like Lars said, I'm in it for the self improvement, and also for the shared common ideals.

—Kirk FitzDavid [Calontir]

No matter what we say or think, the SCA is not a "true" (?) historical re-creation (or re-construction) organization. By virtue of our lack of enforceable standards of historical accuracy, we define ourselves (by our actions) as a social club whose only requirement for participation is dressing up in medieval-esque costume and "being excellent to each other." "The Dream" is our collective *goal*: to create a (dare I say it)

"kinder, gentler"¹ society in which everyone is treated with a certain amount of respect.

Dr. Martin Luther King had a similar dream (sans costume, and on a larger scale) but had he said "I have an idea for an improvement..." we might be living in a very different United States. Perhaps the term is overused. But if so, then it is because so many people feel that it is appropriate.

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

POLITICS

Before I became involved in the Society, I was already working in theatre where a narcissistic, over-bearing obsession with your own welfare is considered a sign of Artistic Genius. I spent two years in the army where the interests of most non-coms and officers in covering their own butts was more important than any abstract values like "Truth," Justice" or Honor." From this background I discovered the SCA which seemed to hold the promise of all the idealism I found lacking in mundane life. When I got heavily into working in the seneschal's office, yea these many years ago, I thought that it was unbelievable how mean and petty people could be in an organization that is supposed to be aiming for ideals of chivalry, honor and all that Good Stuff. We can be very grateful that most people in the Society ARE working toward ideals of chivalry and fair play. Even when there are violent disagreements in the SCA politics, you can usually get the people to at least consider their actions in the light of how well they follow the ideals of chivalry and honor. In the politics of almost any other group of people I have observed (from 4-H to sorority to Community Arts Council to dog training clubs to community action groups), all you generally get for mentioning "Fair Play" and "Chivalry" is a disbelieving stare.

—Ferelith MacDonald [Atenveldt]

IS THERE EVER "TIME OUT"?

Yes and No. Yes, because each person has opinions, which may or may not be the officially endorsed position, and a careful monarch, officer, or peer keeps the line between them clear. And sometimes, particularly during "non-SCA time," one needs to express one's own opinions and desires, but one must choose the time carefully.

No, because one must always be aware that others may not see the separation. For instance, I did not write to *ThinkWell* while I was on the Board of Directors. It was only a nine-month term, and you excerpted stuff from letters I'd already written, so it's possible no one noticed—but I felt it was not appropriate for me to write opinions here while I was in a position of authority.

—Éowyn Amberdrake [Caid]²

¹ I have never voted for King George!

² From the Editor: Sorry, Mistress Éowyn—I didn't even notice myself. Most or all of what I put in involved arts and sciences issues, I think, and those are rarely to never matters having to do with policy decisions. It seems to me that it should make no difference, but if that's true why didn't I start *ThinkWell* while I was steward? I can see both sides, and I'm sorry if I made you nervous by quoting you during your time on the board.

Don't I wish there was. Not to step into the mundane world, but out of it. I want people to separate me, Jean, from Sine whose clothes I wear and whose world I've entered. I'd so love to be a 13th Century liegewoman without fear of ridicule or strange looks from my friends. It's hard for me to separate them from their personas, so how can I expect from them what I am unable to do myself? I guess if I weren't so timid (yes I'm timid, just not shy!) I would become Sine. Maybe someday I will.

—Sine nic Donnchaidh [Meridies]

No way. Friends of mine, as monarchs, have done this, and I didn't think it was appropriate (thought I didn't say anything). Going on a walk to have a private conversation is one thing—everyone has to have friends and/or let off steam to confidants, but taking the Crown off in a crowd and pretending you're not the King because you're not wearing the Crown is another. Perhaps I've no right to say this, having never sat the throne, but as a member of the populace, I felt that actions like that made kingship, as well as this fragile illusion we go to such lengths to produce, utterly transparent. Yuck.

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

HA! Routinely, I attempt to explain to those who are coming up on their first time on the throne just what it will be like. The most useful point is to note that sometime in their four month reign they will get a call at nearly midnight from someone of whom they have never heard—not because the kingdom had a disaster, but just because one of their subjects' love life has just fallen apart, they need someone to talk to, and the king's phone number is listed where it can be easily found. Just as routinely, the prospective monarch looks at me like I have lost my mind and often says something to that effect. And then, a few months later, they come around shaking their heads and saying, "I thought you were being silly about being called on for advice to the lovelorn at midnight. But it happened!" Or, if not that, some topic equally far from the business of the Crown as we see it.

There is no "time out"—the Crown is "always on" from the moment of the coronation until the gasp of relief at the successors' coronation. If the monarch has any sense of responsibility (admittedly, some do not), it's a hellish amount of work and the only relief is to get physically away and not communicate.

—William the Lucky [West]

Ælfæd, I don't think you and Garlanda are as far apart as you think. You are certainly using different words, but I mostly agree with you both. Garlanda says that if the majority of the populace says that it's green, then the Opinion of the Crown is that it's green. I agree with her point, but I would say that her opinion stays where it is, that the *policy* of the Crown is that it's green. As a baron, I have given out awards I've disagreed with, while keeping my private opinions private. Twice, we had people swearing fealty to us, which in general we didn't want. We accepted it, and tried to be proper lieges. Garlanda's principle of public life is quite sound. The Crown must pull out of its faction, to fairly represent all factions. They need to try to be what all their people need in a

ruler, and aren't free to refuse awards, or oaths, simply because of their private beliefs. The hardest part of ruling is being a fair and active ruler to the people who need you, but whom you don't like.

Similarly, Ælfæd is right. Sure, you can take the metal off your head and party, but when a problem comes up, or somebody needs to consult, you have a job to do, and cannot set it aside. Also if you screw up, get drunk, complain, or pass gossip, it was done by "The Crown." There is no time off, but there is (occasionally, in tiny bits) informal time and play time.

—Robin of Gilwell [Ansteorra]

When I became a Peer, I still had opinions (on damned near everything). When I became Kingdom Seneschal, I still had those opinions. It has been suggested to me that I be more circumspect in my comments in *ThinkWell* and other forae because of this office. ~~So ignore everything I've written since January.~~ I think that's a Bad Plan, so you're stuck with me until I run out of money to pay for this or things to say (the smart money's on the former...). Still, I'm not unaware that this is widely read, so, to those folks who are widely reading these very words, a caveat:

THE OPINIONS OF ÆLFÆD OF GLASTONBURH ARE NOT MEANT TO DELINEATE POLICY FOR THE SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM, INC. AND SHOULD NOT BE SO CONSTRUED BY THE READERS OF SAID OPINIONS HEREIN.

We now return you to your regularly scheduled diatribe.....I'm not going to yell "fire" in the theatre, but I cherish very much my right to harangue y'all at length for as long as you'll put up with me. After all, what good is all this experience in the Society if I have to sit on my tongue because I hold an office? Still, I *do* understand that, most of the time, it's not possible to monitor the effect of your words on others, and so I see the value of a certain amount of circumspection. I think all of us have had times when we would cherish the chance to retract something said in haste, foolishness, or anger.

—Ælfæd of Glastonburh [Meridies]

When Batman takes off his mask and becomes Bruce Wayne, he gets time out. While I am speaking as Galen of Bristol, I don't. Robert Bork didn't get time out, Bill Clinton didn't get it, and neither does the Queen of the Middle. (Sorry, Garlanda.)

By the way, I have it in writing from a former Outlands queen that I am *not* a geek (written before she was Queen).

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

Queens don't know everything. (Was it me?) I wouldn't trust a letter from a former queen written before she was queen anyway. What kind of space- and time-continuum do you take this for?

Maybe my real question is whether you get time out when you're speaking as Paul Mitchell. If Sandra says "I think his behavior sucks" about someone in the SCA, did Ælfæd say it?

—Ælfæd of Duckford [Outlands]

AUTHENTICITY & BUNNY-FUR BIKINIS

Confessions of a former "bunny fur boopie"—yes! I confess! It was me, but it wasn't bunny fur, it was chainmail. And—unashamededly—if I had the figure I had then, I'd probably wear it again. But not always. In fact, I only wore it in Caid, at Drieburgen's "Barbarian Tourney," and I got a weird sunburn in return. But as long as chocolate exists (in period or out), there's no danger to any bunnies from me.

—Liran [Ansteorra]

What about chocolate bunnies? Oh, by the way—one of your housemates (Galen) wrote too...

—ælflaED

Re: Bunny-fur bikinis. I have a question more vital than any I've heard about the groups whose women dress this way: Where do they *get* these women? More importantly, where can I!?

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

As long as this is an open, voluntary organization, we will have to learn with/around/past the knuckledraggers amongst us. And, to be fair, they with us the other way.....

—Ædward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

There is no doubt that they are strictly from the comic book and fantasy novel cover genre and nowhere else.

Nonetheless, we don't throw the ladies who wear them out of events on their ear. We allow them to stay and assess them according to our own standards.

The question I ask (see illustration) is whether or not the tolerance for a bunny-fur bikini has a relationship with the way it is worn and who is wearing it. When is it funny? When is it erotic? When is it TDC? When is it revolting?

—William Blackfox [Ansteorra]

I dislike seeing any person on a leash, even toddlers. Still, part of my regular Pennsic experience is spotting the women and, less often, the men who make it seem like a good idea. As an Icelander such sights give Pennsic a flavor of Constantinople and the mysterious exotic East.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

Authenticity Police: Sorry, Cariadoc, but the myth has more basis than any of us would prefer. I have not had anyone come up and hassle me lately either. But I have been in ear-shot when various newcomers were getting harangued unmercifully about relatively minor points. I cannot testify that they spend a major portion of their time at events doing this; I can testify that they do it (and rudely, too) with depressing frequency.

The only thing which keeps them restrained, I suspect, is the occasional individual (Bish, me, etc.) who have conformity to the Authenticity Police very low on our personal list of priorities and do not hesitate to say so. (Which is not to imply that we do not have standards of authenticity ourselves, just that some of us count our standards for manners more highly.)

—William the Lucky [West]



Is there a relationship between the acceptability of the "Bunny-Fur Bikini" and the manner in which it is worn?

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Cariadoc points out the stereotypical Authenticity Police (the people who come up to you and start criticizing your garb before you can say "hi") are probably mythical. I think he's right, but with a caveat—there *are* people who have occasional fits of Excessive Authenticity. I have good friends who have been guilty of the sin of criticizing others unduly—none who do so regularly, but several who have done it on occasion, when they're having a bad day. Such incidents are probably the foundation of the myth.

—Justin du Coeur [East]

They do indeed exist. You can find them belittling the clothing of a newbee and sneering at the first attempts of a beginning calligrapher. You can see their mark in the inflated standard against which they measure gentles under consideration for kingdom level arts awards. It is they who are swift to gloss over the good so as to more quickly come to the shortcomings. It is they who have forgotten their tyro past and it is they who can not accept that their ideals, concepts and opinions are not universally held. They are the hidebound and the intractable. They are the ones who have lost sight of the fact that most people are in this Society to have fun and that the definition of that fun may or may not be their own. The only good point is that their numbers are few.

—Tryggi Grabardr [Atlantia]

We should try to be as authentic as we can although that level will differ from person to person. There are some who are unable to make period pavilions. (Since I travel with my dog, I must have an escape-proof tent.) But I try to make my encampment as period as I can. My accessories are covered and I am in the process of making a canopy to cover my tent fly. However when I am criticized for using my inhaler for an asthma attack I lose it. (I have a form of asthma that causes severe coughing spasms. An inhaler will break the spasm.) I do not plan to have an attack during court or a feast. It is either use the inhaler promptly or cough until I puke because I can't always get up and leave at that moment.

—Teresa Christina Berconi [Meridies]

When looking at authenticity I find that most SCA members fall into one of three categories:

- those who feel authenticity is not really important.
- those who feel authenticity is important in one or more particular areas.
- Those who feel authenticity is important in all areas.

Many of us may feel that authenticity is important in all areas, but we cannot be bothered to be authentic in any but a few areas. That puts us in the second group. Even those who work at authenticity in all areas are not perfect, but they are not neglecting any area.

I often feel that those who do not care about authenticity have no place in our game, but if they left, our game would be very small.

Those of us, like myself, who fall into the second group must be tolerant, especially of others who fall into the same group, but place importance on other areas. Those who fall into the third group must be tolerant of all the rest of us.

Tolerance, whether in authenticity, or religion, or anything

except dishonesty, courtesy or unchivalrous actions, is important to the smooth running of the game we play.

—Conor mac Cinneide [Ansteorra]

Something about all this makes me bristly. Part of why "tolerance" has gotten a bad name in certain quarters is that people have been asked to tolerate *everything*, and when outrageous behavior (dishonesty, courtesy or unchivalrous actions) is questioned or a complaint is voiced, the person who "rocked the boat" is accused of being intolerant.

What should we tolerate?

—Ælfþlæd of Duckford [Outlands]

You know, "barbarian" is an interesting word as it's used in the SCA. Until the invention of the SCA 26 years ago, there was probably no one in the history of the world who ever uttered the sentence "I am a barbarian." My dictionary says a barbarian is a person from a land, culture, or people alien and usually thought to be inferior to one's own, but SCA people who use it usually don't mean it that way. Instead, they use it to excuse a broad range of otherwise inexcusable behavior.

A dear friend of mine, who was once Mistress Margaret van Artevelde but is now gone from the SCA, has a doctorate in anthropology and used to teach it at a large university. She was constantly amazed by the bunny-fur bikini set on a number of levels. First, it is almost universally true that the more "barbaric" a culture, the more likely it is that women will be heavily dressed and indeed secluded from the public eye. Second, the more heavily armed a culture, the more likely it is to have rigid codes of manners, at least within the group. Since the SCA doesn't segregate ethnic groups within its activities, we are all one group and should benefit from that to the extent of being subject to the same standards of polite behavior that one would use within the group. In addition, the only person I can think of who thinks it is appropriate "barbarian" behavior for a man to lead a bunny-fur bikini-clad woman around on a leash is John Norman, and I'm not sure he would approve of the bikini, either. This is an organization dedicated to the study and re-creation of the Middle Ages and Renaissance primarily in Western Europe, with visitors from other parts of the medieval world welcome to participate. I don't think there were many visitors from Gor in medieval Europe (or Asia, or Africa, or anywhere else).

Perhaps I feel so strongly about this because I am (for those who don't know me) not of the general body type that is conducive to wearing bunny fur bikinis in the privacy of my own home, much less in public, but I really don't think that's it. Maybe I'm being irredeemably stuffy, but I think there should be some standards of common decency in an organization that now includes people from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and all age levels. I don't want to explain to my little boy, who is seven, why that lady is wearing a leash, or why the man with her has a coiled whip on his belt. For that matter, I don't want to explain it to the media representatives who heard there was something newsworthy going on at Cooper's Lake, either. The bottom line for me is that anything that would get you arrested for indecent exposure in the real world, or that is better confined to consenting adults

behind closed doors, is probably not appropriate for public consumption at SCA events, whether there are small children present or not. If I want to play the voyeur, I'll rent a pornographic video and watch it at home with my husband.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlanta]

PERSONA

I belong to a group that plays in persona. I confess the root of our inspiration is held in an article written some time ago by Cariadoc in T.I. about the "Enchanted Ground." However, it has taken a great deal of time to actually find a few other people to commit themselves to doing persona. Let me stress that none of us has a persona story. Instead, we like to encourage something we call "the medieval mindset." Let me also add that our concept is for the medieval mind within the context of the SCA. In other words, I am from Caid, not England, although medieval England is the basis of my understanding of the world.

It is much harder to do than I ever thought it would be, not because of myself, but because of outside elements. In truth, when I am with my group, it is second nature—not a show, but actually me. Even when people enter my pavilion, and my group surrounds me, it is quite easy to let this other side of me stand forth. But transplant me into a situation where I have no support, and I fall apart. Fortunately, it is becoming easier to flip back into persona in seconds as opposed to needing hours to reset the mood. How one can pursue persona without support is beyond me, since it is a social activity.

Surprisingly, when we started we discovered a tremendous amount of vocal opposition. Some of it may have been invited in that we allow religion in our group. (For example, we have a short prayer in Latin before a private feast, though not at public banquets.) Yet I think in general people are uncomfortable with people who are in persona. It seems they are afraid they will have nothing to talk about or that they might say something that offends. A friend asked if we plan our conversation in advance of an event. I had to giggle because we talk about many of the same things we always talk about: marriage, politics, babies, friendships, who's doing what to whom, the Crown, etc. We just do it with a different attitude than before.

I have to admit I probably would have quit the SCA if I hadn't discovered living the medieval mind. I was simply bored of sitting around a park in a costume with my friends. This has given me inspiration like nothing before. I find I now devour books on philosophy, etiquette, everyday living and myriad other subjects.

My dearest and oldest friends have the greatest difficulty with what I am doing. For my best friends, I simply drop it. (Note: When I drop I try to take my conversation away from my participating friends so as not to infringe upon them.) Although persona is important to my SCA life, it is not worth losing friendships over. However, I am trying to stop doing this as it only causes confusion (is she in persona, or out?). My ultimate goal is to stay in persona all the time at events.

What I find fascinating is that we draw people who have been in the Society for two years or less. I can't tell you how

many people express fascination for what we do when they are relatively new. They truly *want* to participate. It seems we fulfill some ideal that they have that they are not finding elsewhere. Sure, we're upsetting some of the old-timers because they know us too well, or we're doing something unusual, or they don't want to be bothered with all of this. But I feel encouraged that to be so attractive to new people, we must be doing something right. We aren't perfect at it, but we are making a valiant effort.

—Angela of Rosebury [Caid]

No persona stories!? Your *dog* has a persona story! (And it's a cute one, too.)

I spoke with Mistress Angela about this, and we surprised one another by our different understandings of "in persona." When I read what she described, I was thinking of the "high persona" theories I heard in Ansteorra, but when Angela spoke with me she was describing things like avoiding talking about computers and daily employment and automobiles. I told her we always avoid talking about those things, and if we want to ask our friends about their jobs or non-SCA hobbies or whatever, we do it in quiet voices, away from main groups. She expressed a degree of disbelief and said that such conversations take place around her in full voice in large groups, with no apparent embarrassment. Where I live, references to way-mundane subjects are considered to spoil the atmosphere as much as lack of proper attire.

—Ælfþlæd of Duckford [Outlands]

I would say an oath given in persona does not govern mundane life. However, other questions arise. What of an eager young girl who tells would-be suitors that she's twenty-two, because, well, her *persona* is twenty-two? If people can play personas of other races, sexes, religions, etc., surely there are some who will choose a different age.

Constantly forcing someone to break persona to answer questions ("Waitaminnit—in SCA persona or in mundane life?") can be frustrating for all involved. Perhaps the easiest solution is to assume that somebody is in persona unless they tell you otherwise. Of course, when you assume...

The easiest way to tell is when dealing with individuals who speak fluently and/or with a different accent when in persona. Obviously, the change in speech denotes the change in context.

—Michael of the Isles [East]

FORMALITY/TITLES

I get a lot of people who, out of nervousness, struggle to introduce me to their friends. Sir Master Master? They know they won't be punished for getting it wrong. They smile, I smile, maybe it's just Peer Fear. I don't think they ever really worry about my feelings when they go out of their way to make me feel odd or abnormal.

A couple of people have even been going out of their way to say things like, "Watch out! Here comes a Triple Peer!" They seem less innocent.

I am just about ready to drop courtesy to tell these people off.

I understand that three bestowed peerages are not common, but I consider the Royal Peerages to be equally significant, which makes anyone Duke Sir a Triple Peer to me. That makes Quintuple Peers of such people as Thomann Shadan Secarius and Cariadoc of the Bow.

Several years ago I even created a game called CALONTIR in which players attempted to rise from novice to Duke Sir Master Master in the few hours of game time. It even had rules for sleazing Crown Tournament. It demonstrated quite well that the LUCK to stay healthy, active, and well-thought-of has a great deal to do with advancement in our Society.

—Lars Vilhalmsson [Calontir]

I suppose the perfect balance is impossible. I find it a great embarrassment, too, when someone introduces me and says "She has everything," or "There are no awards she doesn't have." If I say, "Sure there are," it seems that I'm about to catalog the ones I don't have. If I say nothing, it seems an acknowledgement that I have "everything" which certainly isn't true.

I'm embarrassed if someone gives me an honor to which I'm not entitled. If I'm called "Your Grace," I feel the need to correct the person, but I don't want to embarrass anyone. I've heard stories told with *no sympathy whatsoever* of people who accept forms of address which aren't theirs and don't correct the speaker. I can think of a handful of reports of people with large coronets who, out of kingdom, were bowed lowly to and addressed as kings or queens and who made no move to correct people, or of those who accepted "your excellency" or "your grace" with recognition and raised head and made no move to admit their lower rank. They are not told in "poor guy" mode, but they are "what a jerk" stories. For myself, I think the ideal response would be "You do me too great an honor," but that doesn't fit into every conversation that comes along.

For every person who feels too much respect (or fawning) is being shown, there is surely another (or two) who resents not receiving their due. This means it's hard for people to know how to aim their guesses—too high or too low. I don't want to discourage people from talking to strangers. I would appreciate advice from anyone from any perspective on this minor but constant problem.

—Ælflað of Duckford [Outlands]

What about those of us who are addressed by higher titles than we deserve?

I was a fighter for many years, and have become something of a "fixture" in my region. I have had people tell me they were striving to emulate me (scary thought!) in matters of courtesy and chivalry. I have some knowledge of the arts and sciences, and am often turned to as a "ready-reference." I also hold a simple AoA as my most precedential award. Yet I am often addressed as Sir _____ or Master _____.

Likewise I know a court baroness who is frequently used as an information and instruction source. She has taught at the collegiums where she was introduced as a Mistress of the Laurel, which she is not.

Now it would be easy to let one's ego rule, assume the populace is recognizing peerage quality while the Crown does not, and let the mistake go unrectified, but propriety and due

respect for those who have said rank dictate otherwise. Yet how can one gently tell a person that they have placed one too high? To constantly have to tell people, "No, I don't have the rank that you and so many others think I deserve" seems a lot like sour grapes no matter how one sugar-coats the phrase. Saying "The honor of knighthood is reserved for those more worthy than I" reeks of false humility! I would love to hear input on this!

There is another, possibly interconnected problem here as well. Many people seem to assume that "long-timers" already have all the awards, and overlook them when writing recommendation letters. I recently was shocked to discover a kingdom A&S champion didn't have our baronial arts award. I had just always assumed otherwise! Likewise I know long-serving and long-suffering officers who are eclipsed award-wise by newcomers receiving a precedential service award that everyone assumed the old-timer already possessed. The inadvertent injustice (like the perception that everyone but the Crown thinks that you are peer quality) can eat like a cancer as one ponders "Why not me!" during award ceremonies. This can happen to even those who are not overly covetous of awards—after all don't we all want the recognition we deserve?

Few solutions present themselves. We can all start listing all our titles like we did in the old alphabet soup days which is non-period and boring. We can all look at the order of precedence and be properly shocked by what awards our friends and acquaintances don't have and then all write to the king. (Who is going to get everyone motivated enough to do that?)

It's funny, how everyone saw one side of the coin, the peer who is called m'lord. The obverse is just as serious a problem, and a sadder one. Please withhold my name if you print this, lest people think it a personal plea for recognition.

—Not the Only One

EVENTS

To Bish on the subject of camping: First, don't ever try camping in Ansteorra, if you don't like camping at Pennsic. I was amazed to find that one could actually walk around Pennsic barefoot; most of our greenery has thorns, and most of our bugs bite. On the other hand, I agree with the idea that a tent should keep out things like rain and bugs, especially on week-long events. Over the past year we've gotten into the habit of taking a proper bed (you know—headboard, footboard, space underneath for monsters to hide) rather than sleeping pads to events. It makes mornings ever so much more pleasant, and I rather expect that if one were to do the research, beds were probably used in period tents as well. Besides, as my lady wife is fond of saying "decadence is its own reward."

—Tivar Moondragon [Ansteorra]

You have greenery!?

—Ælflað [Outlands]

Trimarian events are usually weekend events with tenting and cabins. Feast is usually served at a cost of \$5 per person and includes breakfast Saturday, dinner Saturday, and breakfast Sunday (often leftovers from Saturday's feast). Snack on Friday night and lunch on Saturday are uncommon

but not too uncommon. Three day events extend all this through Monday for an additional fee of \$4 to \$5. Sites usually open by 3:00 pm on Friday and are open until about 11:00 am Sunday. Most events are held at centrally located sites so that no one has too far to travel. Royalty is present at all kingdom events and at many local events. Trimarians also travel either light or heavy based on personal preference and persona. Heraldic display is common, especially among peers and local groups. Directors' chairs are common. Some are covered, and some have the arms of the owner painted on the back. Coolers and such are expected to be covered, but too often aren't.

Camping tales: Not only does Trimaris have enough humidity most of the year to make us feel like we are breathing water, and to dampen anything not kept in an airconditioned house, but we get rain nearly every day during some portions of the year (like spring, summer, and fall). This is a lot of fun to tent in (ha, ha). For instance, we fondly remember events such as "Coro-nothing" where a hurricane blasted our first Coronation, and "Blow-Sci" where tornado watches were in effect and trees squashed tents with their sheddings. Trimaris is a great place to test out a brand of tent for durability. A friend of mine recently bought a tent and was so pleased that the front portion was made of screen. In truth screening is important in 90+ degree temperatures with near 100% humidity and little if any air movement. However, during the first big storm she discovered one little problem. The tent's walls were slanted and the floor was sewn in with a 8" overlap on the walls. After each rain she had her own indoor swimming pool! The tent lasted through few of these storms before self destructing, and this lady is now in search of yet another tent.

—Elfwyn de Barfleur [Trimaris]

Ælfþlæd remarks about how people in the Outlands will pay for a truck to wet down the roads. It's wonderful to look at Kingdom Differences, isn't it? This summer I was at an event where the rain on Saturday morning was so heavy that it turned the road from the parking lot to the camping area to a river of mud. For 24 hours, nothing but the farm's tractor could get through (which made things *quite* interesting, because there were some 400 people at the event). The East has many problems with events, but excessive dryness is *not* one of them...

—Justin du Coeur [East]

Ansteorra's first Crown Tournament had a big rain on Friday with a wading-river-road as I recall, for those who arrived late. I felt just like the National Geographic pictures of the Indians or Pakistanis wading through monsoon waters with sewing machines on their heads (only ours were guitars). The fact that it wasn't but calf-deep didn't spoil my exotic self image. It was exciting for desert dwellers.

—Ælfþlæd of Duckford [Outlands]

Baroness Susan's statement "They/We want to be entertained!" kind of gave me the willies. As I understand the nature of this organization, autocrats provide the means and the opportunity for people to entertain themselves. I do not go to events expecting someone else to have done all the work—I

go with my own music, my own needlework, my own games, and my own interests and conversation. I do not expect, nor do I want someone to tell me what to do and when to do it. Certainly there needs to be a framework around which people can build the event, but I think it's asking way too much of the autocrat to provide all our entertainment as well as the site, the staff, the food (if any), and the basic structure.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CEREMONY

The herald bellows in a booming baritone "Their Majesties, the King and Queen." The assembled hordes in multi-hued finery stand as the regal pair attended by an awe-inspiring retinue sweep into the grandly-set stage of throne and palanquin. Now what? Even if the visual reality of the occasion approaches the above description, chances are that what follows is mumbled, predictable, and boring.

As a people we are not accustomed to enjoy ceremony. And I believe that we do not. The Twentieth Century is not a great age of ceremony. The ritualized words and actions appropriate to special occasions cause embarrassment and self-consciousness in even the most theatrical of modern people. Wedding parties giggle and stumble through forced rehearsals. Graduates put up with commencements for their financially exhausted parents' sake. Few of us would seek opportunities in the course of our mundane lives to indulge in ceremony. We have erected rigid and formidable barriers between ourselves and ceremony.

Yet, in our participation in the Known World, we paradoxically seek to integrate ceremony into our recreation even as we exclude it from our everyday life. Ceremony serves to highlight and reinforce the extraordinary in our ordinary lives. The Known World is already set apart by clothing, setting and traditions. Devising ways to distance and elevate further those occasions worthy of celebration in it requires a solution that is an on-going process.

The need for ceremony is deeply rooted in people. The Known World is itself a manifestation of this. Ceremony performs several functions: it entertains; it informs; it socializes; and it chronicles. These last two functions are often overlooked, but are perhaps the most important. The communion of a Kingdom witnessing the rites that unify it and define it is a powerful force. Our common goals and values are often best transmitted through our ceremony, for good or ill.

Ceremony also serves as the outward manifestation and celebration of our history. It is not insignificant that heralds attend tournaments and conduct the appropriate rites. (It is also worthy of note that many of our activities that historically enjoy an unwarranted lack of respect, such as A&S events, suffer from a notorious lack of ceremony.)

The types and manners of ceremony are as infinite as the people who invented them. But a few major streams of ceremony concern us. There are ceremonies that solemnize or celebrate events in our progression from womb to grave. Births, weddings, and deaths have myriad and particular rites in each of the countless groups into which people congregate.

In this category we might add rites of passage such as confirmations, graduations, and bar mitzvahs. The other major source of ceremony that affects the Known World is holidays and holy days. Every nation has a set of days that mirror a life of ceremonies on a yearly schedule. Christ, for instance, is born, grows up, and dies every year symbolically. The United States celebrates its birthday July 4 and it's dead May 30 every year.

In the Known World, as I have indicated earlier, our regular interaction has already moved beyond the mundane. In addition, our appreciation of time and its passing is skewed. Like some real Brigadoon, we exist, at best, one or two days a week for some two score or fewer weeks a year. I have been in and of the Known World for some 18 years. In that time, I have observed five generations from those who taught me to the squires of my squires' squires. Time moves both with blinding speed and glacial slowness in the Known World. All of this affects our ceremony.

Our ceremonies celebrate our individual and collective lives. The major business of courts is the recognition of people's "growth" in the Known World. What is a peerage ceremony but a highly stylized rite of passage? Coronations are our weddings marrying King to Queen and monarchs to subjects all at once. These weddings follow our only, regularly scheduled funeral ceremonies, by the way. A kingdom's annual events are its holidays. In Atlantia, Emerald Joust or Ymir are our holidays. They come at regular times and follow familiar patterns. The Pennsic war is the whole Known World's high holy days or holidays, depending on one's approach.

We exist in the Known World like slowly-aging Mathuselahs. Thinking of my squires, I see the birth, education and maturation of my charges take place in three or four years, not eighteen. A coronation that was for our paradigmatic forebears a rare once or twice in a lifetime delight is for us a twice or thrice yearly obligation. The typical reaction in the Known World to ceremony runs a progress from initial excitement, to eager participation, to bored participation, to heckling, to careful avoidance.

Several strategies exist to counteract the insensate familiarity. The two most popular are the church and the historical.

In the church model, the setting, clothes, props, and actions of ceremony are invested with the dignity of age and tradition. The ritual formulae are unvarying. Over the generations (two or three years remember), the holy words acquire the patina of ancient gold. This path also looks favorably on the slow accretion of detail and stagecraft. The church approach has these advantages: it is easily accessible to the audience; it allows heralds to acquire mastery of the rites through their constant repetition; it gains the resonance of antiquity very, very quickly. Unfortunately, small children and the godless do not often enjoy church-going.

The historical approach calls for adapting historical models to our at-hand needs. For my second Coronation, I translated Henry I's ceremony from Latin to English, excised all references to the Church, and made a few other changes in the three pages I had left. It was a fine text. It was short, but it had something to do with the Middle Ages. The problems

with this approach are also manifold. Holy Mother Church was more pervasive in our forebears' lives than in ours, particularly if we are samurai, Aztec, followers of the False Prophet Mahound, or any of scores of rich and varied peoples in the Known World. There are also events with few historical models—the creation of Pelicans or Laurels, for instance. The historical approach often requires skills and resources beyond the competence of the particular individual creating the ceremony. However, it approaches more closely the ideal of what the Known World is about to my mind.

A third approach, and the one I promote, is the persona-specific approach. The persona of any of the participants may be used to create a ceremony. Blending elements of the church and historical approaches under the informing idea of persona produces a ceremony with enough novelty for the jaded, grandeur for the bored, and interest for the stuffy purist.

—Gyrth Oldcastle [Atlantia]

KINGSHIP

A King in tennis shoes, while not something to be encouraged, does not kill the magic for me very fast. Perhaps because I rarely look at the king's feet. Now someone holding court in white stretch pants, a spandex bra, and a sideless surcoat—that kills the magic. (Yes, Michael, I have seen exactly that. I'm afraid that I did not even notice the shoes.) It must be nice to have nothing more jarring than tennis shoes on a monarch....¹

—William the Lucky [West]

Sorry—I thought it was both hard work and a ton of fun to be queen. Certainly there were times it wasn't fun at all, but overall, I wouldn't have missed the experience for the world. And in all humility, I don't think I did such a bad job. Of course, it helped that Gyrth was king at the time.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

I want dignity from royalty. Some things this set of Royalty are doing is wonderful. They are arranging for scrolls ahead of the awards, they are making use of all the available awards, and they are making a concerted effort to listen to what people have to say and consider the input they are given (all great things which you don't realize you've missed until you get them back).

Another neat thing happened when the King and Queen came to our event (which isn't a surprise—they live in our group). The King approached me (as Baroness) before court and wanted to know if there was someone there at their first event. I scanned the crowd and named one. The King called him into court and presented him with a knife saying that while Atlantia was a peaceful kingdom, he would not like to see one of his subjects travelling with no means of protection. It was a simple thing, but it was a wonderful moment. One of those turning points for a new person—to get a gift, from the King, just for being there. Keen!

—Siobhan O'Riordain [Atlantia]

¹ And I speak as one whose many faults have never come close to including membership in the Costume Nazis.

I just HAD to reply to Lars Viljhalmsson's comment on page 20.¹ Now, keep in mind that these figures aren't going to apply to all kingdoms. The Middle is a 48 hour drive from one corner to the other. We have more than 3,000 paid members, about 120 groups, and around 200 polling peers. Stamps for one set of polls for all three orders cost us \$60. Xeroxing for our first poll cost us \$100. We will do two or three polls for our reign. Our phone bills are at least \$300 per month, up from about \$100 a month. We have averaged one weekend off a month, and spend about \$50 per event. We go to separate events about once a month. That adds up to over \$2,000 for a year. Then, if we want to go to Estrella, which we plan on, there is \$600 in airline tickets. Big events like Pennsic cost even more. And of course, royalty is expected to look the part. We expect to have over \$1000 worth of new garb, not including several hundred dollars' worth we have been given as gifts. We have no idea how much we will spend total, but one recent royal couple who went all out spent \$14,000. Yes, I said \$14,000. On one reign. Our kingdom reimburses \$600 worth of expenses, for which we are very grateful, but if monarchs complain, they have reason. Nor do these figures include how much our staff pays when they go along to help. When Finn was King's Champion and I was Crown Wrangler to Their Graces Comar and Lisa, we spent \$3,000.

The demands placed on royalty are really high. Our kingdom is huge, and every group wants to host us. How can we say no? It's our job. It's our pleasure, too. The warmth and welcome we receive amazes me every time we go to an event.

If you really want to win a Crown or Coronet tourney, plan ahead to spread out the cost. Stockpile fabric on sale. Make a dowry chest of beautiful garb. Start a Reign Fund, and make monthly deposits so that when you win, you can do it the way you want. Save up vacation time at work so you can go to and from events without losing income. Make sure your credit cards are paid off, just in case. Find a cheap copy shop. Plan out what you want to do, where and how. Perhaps planning ahead like this is arrogant. But if you don't win, you will still be beautifully dressed and financially secure, and that's not a bad way to be.

As to how to reduce the cost? Principalities help. That's another set of hands to help with the problems and paperwork. A couple who can give special attention to an area, so that their needs are filled, and the Crown is not spread so thin. Loan royalty garb so they don't have to buy it. Contribute to royal travel funds. Send them stamps. If your shire is hosting royalty, buy them lunch or a tank of gas. Let them call you collect. Eventually what we expect royalty to do will have to change. Currently the SCA is growing so fast, and as the Crown is the focus of our game of Let's Pretend, its job has expanded too. Sorry if I've been a little rabid here. This sort of stuff has really been on my mind lately (gee what a surprise!). Happily enough, we figured Finn would win Crown Tourney eventually and we prepared in all the ways I listed above. (Except for the cheap copy shop part. Boy that

xeroxing hurt!)

In the Middle, nobody really teaches folks what it takes to do the job of King and Queen. A lot of times people win and are unprepared for the cost in time or money. Educate your hot unbelts and chivalry. You will get better royalty out of it in the long run.

—Garlanda de Stanas [Middle]

At one time there was (and may still be) in Atlantia a notebook handed down from Princess to Princess, containing many deep secrets of being Royal. One of these was something like "Always remember to use the restroom before Court."

I agree in essence with Lars' "Good Old Days" comment (#12, about complaints about the expense of being royalty). But I also think there is no question that reigns can be expensive, although I don't know why they should be *more* expensive nowadays. Even with the free event reservations that the royalty frequently gets, you are still talking about travelling three or four weekends a month, with all the attendant costs (gas, car repairs, tolls, food, lodgings, and sometimes airfare). In addition, there are the usually-massive long distance bills, and a certain unavoidable amount of postage and administrative costs. Plus the desire to appear ROYAL, with fine clothing and rich gifts for tourney victors and royal cousins. And we're a kingdom whose lands are all contiguous!

Atlantia has just established a travel fund to offset some of these expenses—it covers 50% (up to \$500) of in-kingdom travel costs and 100% of out-kingdom travel (up to \$500) and an additional \$350 for prizes for Kingdom-sponsored tourneys (such as Pennsic) and gifts to other royalty, per reign. This is a hefty increase from the \$40 per reign previously reimbursed. The law has just gone into effect so we will have to see if it is still prohibitively expensive to rule. But the fact that the royal peers at Curia believed these were not-unreasonable numbers leads me to believe that the cost of ruling is higher than we might like. How could we make it lower?

—Keilyn FitzWarin [Atlantia]

Ditto to everything Susannah said (TW #12, page 20). Sounds like I'd have enjoyed her reign.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

PUPPETMASTERS

Do other kingdoms have the Puppetmaster Principle? (the idea that every new set of royalty is secretly controlled by a duke somewhere).

—Garlanda de Stanas [Middle]

It's insulting, isn't it? Gunwaldt and I had just palled up to a couple of newer members, and we liked them a whole bunch, when he won crown tournament. We told them we were going to back away and not hang around with them until after the reign so that people wouldn't say we were telling them what to do. This is what we learned: The people who say those things don't care whether what they say is true.

¹ This is a reference to Lars' comment in Issue #12 under "the good old days" saying he missed the days that royalty didn't complain about the expense. —elfaED

That whole reign we looked the other way, didn't ask how things were going (but told them we would help if we were specifically asked), etc. It didn't matter—word came back that they were "puppets." It was untrue, unkind and unfounded. It was just a way that someone who wasn't very secure could insult the Crown and get some attention. We don't have walls in our kingdoms that people can spraypaint, and so their vandalism takes other forms. (My apologies to law-abiding Vandals or other northern tribesmen in the readership.)

—Ælflaed of Duckford [Outlands]

REVOLVING DOOR REIGNS or The Once and Every Other King

Her Excellency, Siobhan O'Riordain is curious as to how people feel about once and every other kings.

—ælflaED

HERALDIC HEIRS

In Mistress Hollyn's bio, she says that Laurel "closed the door" on heraldic heirs. Unless I'm quite mistaken, she's wrong here—I know several heralds who still actively push the idea of heraldic heirs at people. I believe that all it takes is a short note to the Laurel office to designate someone as your heir.

—Justin du Coeur [East]

"THE GOOD OLD DAYS"

These *are* the good old days! I'm having a great time, and intend to roll with any changes which occur so that I will continue to have a great time in what will continue to be the Good Old Days.

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

In what ways has the SCA affected your mundane life?

We had an awards ceremony at work with a "mod" theme. They asked everyone to wear clothes from the late 60's-early 70's. I announced loudly that I could not imagine dressing in such a silly fashion. The entire office burst out laughing. They had to explain the joke to me.

—Siobhan O'Riordain [Atlantia]

HOUSEHOLDS

When I consider what a household is in the mundane sense it is quite easy to define—a household is a clique. The strict definition of a clique is that it is a small exclusive group held together by common attitudes or beliefs. The connotation, however, is generally derogatory which is not necessarily the case with households. Within the context of the SCA, these households serve an important positive role in creating certain aspects of the Middle Ages as well as being a basis for socialization.

In period, society was broken into household units. The Middle Ages is a time when the individual is defined by a group identity. It is only during the Renaissance that the identity of the individual emerges. Households have provided the element of group identity which is key to the period.

Within many households there is stratification. An attitude of the period is that all men are not created equal. Each person was conscious of where he fit into the various levels and relationships of society. Many SCA households contain a head, spouse, apprentices, squires, proteges, ladies-in-waiting, men at arms, retainers, wards, etc., thus recreating rankings which were the building blocks of society.

There are numerous democratic households in the Society. (I was involved with one for a short time.) Yet they seem foolish in that they fill no philosophical need—only that of self-serving cliquishness. The democratic house which rejects the structures of our period also reject the mindset of the period for a modern sense of individualism. Thus the appropriately applied negative associated with the term "clique" is falsely removed by substituting the socially acceptable institution of the household. Although it may go against our sense of right as Americans to turn away from democracy, it is essential in the world we re-create to keep from becoming an organization of cliques.

All households, democratic or not, do provide education and socialization opportunities unavailable to the unattached. Still, I recommend to anyone that they spend a year in the Society before signing into a household. The danger of becoming involved in a group out of ignorance is too great. A household which is attractive on the surface may not really meet an individual's needs as they discover what they are looking for in the Society. Our world can be played in a variety of ways. A household thus needs to be carefully selected to meet personal goals.

On the negative side, households make the newcomer feel like an outsider until they become involved with a household. There is also potential for social abuse within and related to households that are unusually strong, especially if there is a powerful head.

I am told Caid has a comparatively weak household system. Allowing for the poor perspective of having lived only here, I will still try to describe our households as best I may. Households are in great flux here. Many households crop up and last a couple of years. We have very few that have existed for a great length of time. The concept of the powerful household of a great leader is exceptional. There is a great deal of interaction between household members and "outsiders." I speak of all members, not just the leaders who are expected to build relationships outside of the house. Indeed, people do not strictly define themselves by household affiliation. Households tend to be informal in structure. They are like the stereotypical Californian—loose and laid back.

—Mistress Angela of Rosebury [Caid]

"IT'S ONLY A GAME"

It's only a game in the respect that if the SCA were to end tomorrow, while my life would have a very large hole in it,

the world (i.e. the one with starvation, pollution and wars that get people really dead) would still be there. For me the SCA is only a hobby. It is one I take seriously but it is not my entire life. When I use the phrase "It's only a hobby" it is to people who have made it the number one priority in their lives (above family, work or financial needs). I also train and show my dogs in mundane obedience competition. That too is just a hobby. While I have the added benefit of a well-behaved (most of the time) dog, I compete for the fun of it, not to make money. It is the same with the SCA. I have the added benefits of learning to sew, wash up after a 300 person feast and knowing people I otherwise wouldn't know. I am in the SCA for fun, not profit.

—Teresa Christina Berconi [Meridies]

Try and tell the manager of your nearest pro franchise that his sport is "only a game." Think about what he might say to you.

Many games are serious. We are willing to work hard because we take our game seriously. Occasionally, we get really silly, because we are trying to have fun. Walking the line between the two is difficult. Straying too often on the serious side can lead to burn out. Straying too often to the fun side can lead to not being taken seriously. To counteract either of these results you must do a long stretch across the line on the other side.

—Conor mac Cinneide [Ansteorra]

SCA CULTURE

Even though it is made up of people who have places in the outside world, the SCA has a culture which is markedly different from the culture of the outside world. It may be useful to view the culture of the SCA as a subset of the modern culture.

Most cultures have evolved out of some earlier culture, so the ultimate basis of a culture may be lost in pre-history. The SCA differs in that its culture was consciously created by a small group of people in Berkeley, CA in 1966. They may not have known that they were creating a culture. In fact, they probably thought they were recreating a culture.

No matter how carefully they made their attempt, it was bound to fail in some important ways.

They were (and are) 20th Century persons and no matter how hard they tried, they could not recapture a truly medieval mindset. Medieval man viewed the world as unchanging. New ideas were seldom accepted with relish, and this can be shown by the great lengths to which Henry II of England went to convince the English that his new ideas were really a return to old ways of doing things.

The culture of the SCA formed in the early years from our modern culture and the culture of the Middle Ages as the early members perceived it. They consciously created a game based on medieval life and in doing so, they created a culture.

This culture must be one of the few whose creation is well known. This culture is also unique because it is based on a previously existing culture which can be studied. This allows the SCA to enrich itself as members discover elements of

medieval culture and integrate them into SCA culture.

The Culture of the SCA is based on three pillars. These pillars can be in conflict. They are historical medieval culture, fictional medieval culture and Victorian fictional medieval culture.

The first conflict rises from within the first pillar. The SCA recreates all of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This encompasses many cultures. This can lead to conflict as members attempt to accurately recreate individual cultures.

The epics and romances which were popular during the Middle Ages and Renaissance present a culture which is different from the actual culture of these times. Historians debate the influence of these fictional works on the mind of medieval man. To dispute that these fictions have their effect on our culture would be futile. In the SCA, these works often hold a place right beside actual history.

The third pillar comes from the 19th Century. During the reign of Queen Victoria chivalric romances enjoyed great popularity. The cult of chivalry became very important. This popularization of chivalry led to such events as the Eglinton tournament, which provided some of the inspiration to certain persons in Berkeley in the '60's. Writers like Walter Scott and Arthur Conan Doyle left stories which inspired Victorian readers and can inspire us today.

Under the influence of these three pillars, the SCA has developed an extremely diverse and occasionally disjointed culture. It has given us a cultural context where William Marshall, Lancelot du Lac and Ivanhoe all hold equal position.

This leaves the SCA with contradictions. As an example consider chivalry. The SCA claims to recreate the Middle Ages and Renaissance, yet when it comes to chivalrous behavior we expect more of Lancelot than William Marshal.

I put this into the pot in the hope of eliciting comment.

—Conor mac Cinneide [Ansteorra]

DAME/SIR

There is one topic that has really touched me. In TW #8, page 12, William the Lucky speaks of his kingdom's practice of announcing female fighters on the field. I have not noticed this in the Outlands, but then I don't get to very many tournaments so I could be wrong. But William's question leads me to a subject I'm touchy about. Forgive me if I start to get frothy at the mouth.

Please, somebody, anybody, give me a logical explanation as to why a Knight who happens to be female is called Sir? I really can't understand this practice unless this woman had a sex change when she became a member of the Chivalry. Or perhaps the men are so afraid of a woman who can fight they have to pretend she is a man. I really find this practice offensive. I am very proud of being a woman and I do happen to be a woman who enjoys a fight. (I was on a military boxing team for three years. I wasn't allowed to compete but I truly enjoy sparring with the men!) Just because a woman likes to fight doesn't mean she is trying to become a man. I find it very disappointing that we are still believing that being a woman isn't good enough.

—Lady Richenza le Wydu [Outlands]

When we met Mary of Uffington at a long-ago Pennsic, not too long after she had been knighted, she was calling herself "Lady" Mary. We thought that was modest and quite charming; I've always thought "Sir" was a little silly/awkward/stilted for a lady (fond as I am of some of the women I know who are knights). I was surprised to see Lucky's comment that Lady Mary used "Sir," although I'm certain he knows her better than I ever did. I wonder what made her change her mind.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

What do I call a Lady Knight? Anything she wants!!!

So far as I've heard, all of the distaff Chivalry use the title of "Sir" and damned right of 'em. They prove all the time that a "Sir" (Lady) can be as much a lady as any other.

I never had a second thought about fighting women in a fair fight in my early days in the SCA. I was there when Syf Ironhand (now Sir Syf O'Donnell) first showed up at a Namron fighter practice. She was a tomboy of the first water, yes, but she was a Knight and a Lady when she became Queen of Ansteorra. Yes, Sir!

—William Blackfox [Ansteorra]

"Sir" is the accepted period usage for those aristocrats whose function was defined by fighting. I believe that "Sir" is the proper title for a Lady Knight whose Peerage has been earned by prowess.

—Conor mac Cinneide [Ansteorra]

LANGUAGE NOTE

To William the Lucky: Yes, as expressions like "faggot knights" suggest, the Bubba Factor will be with us ever and anon (apologies tendered herein to any philosophers out there named Bubba).

—Edward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

MASTERS OF ARMS

Quick, let me get on the record with this: just because it has been the *practice* of Meridies to make only knights, it is not *policy*, never has been, and never will be. (Thanks, I now feel better!)

—Edward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

MSCA Update:¹ The Lady in question *did* opt for a baldric. If anyone had a problem with this, it was less than visible. (Of course a few people kidded Duke Frederick, but...) As far as I could tell, the general position seemed to be: "Well it seems a bit off to me, but if that's what she wants...."

—William the Lucky [West]

Before much ink is spent, let me ask on behalf of the readership, please: What title is she using?

—ælflaED

Atlantia has never (to my knowledge) made a Master, nor does it currently seem they ever intend to. I walked past a discussion where the king was advising the crown prince on this topic. What he said was that he calls a candidate in and said "I am minded to make you a knight, will you accept this accolade?"—this is a yes or no question. They are not offered any alternative.

—Siobhan O'Riordain [Atlantia]

Atlantia has no Masters of Arms that I know of. Taking the baldric has recently (in the last decade) been a popular decision in certain great houses in the East—Feral, Randal, Lucan, Tearlach, Turlogh and Takechi from one house, plus John and Bjorn, that I can think of. Certainly they and the other Masters from longer ago, such as Kobayashi Yutaka (sorry, Kobi, makes you sound antique...) provide the sort of example of Master that William says is missing in the West. Certainly it is a big deal at some Eastern vigils—will it be the belt or the baldric??

—Keilyn FitzWarin [Atlantia]

Ælfæd lists the Masters that she knows of. I don't think any are Eastern, and the East probably has more than anywhere else. Probably one in four of new members of the Chivalry around here take the baldric, so we have quite a few. Off the top of my head, a few prominent ones include Duke Randal of the Dark, King Lucan, Feral von Halstern (sometime Pennsic warlord), Bjorn Karlsson (Earl Marshal) and Counts Balfar and Ruslan. (In fact, Lucan is the fourth Master of Arms in a row to hit the throne...)

—Justin du Coeur [East]

VIGILS

Peers-only vigils? I think that's silly! Isn't humility a quality one looks for in a peer? If so, then how can anyone justify excluding non-peers from vigils? It seems to me that to do so would be excluding an entire class of people, telling them that nothing they might have to say would be worth hearing. As if the peerage ceremony magically endows one with wisdom to which only peers are privy. I am glad that this is not the custom in my kingdom; I don't think I would accept the peerage from a bunch like that. I thought we, as the SCA, were trying to get away from arbitrary prejudices. It reeks of class-ism. Non-peers to the back of the bus, and all that.

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

Istvan, if we were trying to be a classless society, why would we be spending such a huge amount of our effort competing (in several arenas) for titles and rank? Our entire "culture" centers around choosing kings and queens (and thereby making counts and duchesses and such).

Australians and Canadians are excused from this paragraph, but I think many people enjoy the SCA because it's a foray

¹ the quote from Issue #12: "we may be about to get some discussion, as one of our fighters...started out in another kingdom and intends to opt for a baldric when the offer is made. This may generate some reaction; there is just no way to tell what everyone's prejudices may be until the issue becomes real, rather than (as now) essentially theoretical."

into a way of life our ancestors gave up when they decided that the president would be "Mister" and judges would be "Your Honor" and that was about it. Universities make doctors of various sorts, but outside those few minor titles, gabillionaires use the same "Mister" as guys in cardboard boxes. It's kind of fun to pretend that people could become something special with something other than money. When enough people are playing, it's no longer quite pretend any more; they really *are* special (in a limited world).

Depending how you define a vigil, either of our favorite scenarios is defensible. If it's seen as a reception at which people go in and say "I'm so happy for you," and "You'll do a great job," it might as well be just anyone. If it's seen as a formal initiation or a ritual examination of a candidate, then it doesn't make sense for it to be open to anyone and everyone. We live in a dinky kingdom compared to some, and there have been many vigils—even all-nighters—at which people had a difficult time getting in at all. It has become common for someone to have an attendant (sort of a combination of receptionist and guard) who tries to manage traffic flow. Many times I've heard peers say they came and waited an hour or more and finally had to go away.

I'm sure that part of my opinion is based on specific individuals—cases in which a wise, experienced peer was waiting outside while people who probably never will even be trusted with an office are in there being goofy and breaking the mood. Istvan, you're the kind of person who makes sense and people listen to you. You seem also to be the sort who could engineer a serious conversation at a different time and place. There are other people—peers—whose shyness might keep them from striking up a philosophical conversation on their own. There are sometimes people whose politics would pretty much preclude their having a heart-to-heart talk with the candidate *ever* in the future, but they might use that one window of opportunity—the vigil—to look one another in the eye and say things that are important to them. When people miss a vigil they sometimes say that they'll talk to the person some other time, but I don't think it often happens.

Not all our vigils are the same here—some are mixed, some have two different "sessions," and a few are peers only. I'm glad people have the option to go whichever way they would like (subject to the pressures of their mentors, the Crown, etc.). I don't think any of these involves telling people that nothing they have to say is worth hearing.

Please don't be afraid to change your position someday when one of your apprentices is standing vigil and you're at an event with 600 people and you *might* want to suggest limiting the access a little bit.

—Ælflaed of Duckford [Outlands]

REGALIA AND PEERS

Ælflaed asks whether one of the duties of a Peer is to accept the courtesy that people want to pay them. Well, yes and no. It is true that the Peers fill something of a niche in the Society, by filling out the ranks of the people to "look up to." Most people in the SCA want at least a somewhat hierarchical society; after all, that's medieval.

On the flip side, though, another job of the Peerage is to educate, and I think that, to some degree, regalia gets in the way of that. For example, although I'm comfortable in almost any crowd these days, I still get the biggest kick from hanging out with the novices. I like to think that I fill a fairly useful role there, helping them out with SCA culture and serving as a voice of experience when they need one. But the newcomers often intimidate easily, and nothing does so faster than finding out that you are a Peer of the Realm. Therefore, I tend not to use my regalia except during real High Court occasions—it gets in the way of education, which I consider more important.

(There's nothing wrong with wearing regalia if you like, mind—the Society *does* need some serious Peers to help with the atmosphere. But we Stealth Peers fill a useful role in society, too...)

—Justin du Coeur [East]

PEER FEAR

I was pretty intimidated by peers early on, which was partly due to being in the military where rank has more muscle. Sir Æthelred the Jute and Mistress Kyrieth, now of that unmentionable barony in Caid, got me over that by having newcomers meetings in their house. After a week or two, they turned out to be normal, really neat people. On the other hand, I've probably gone too far the other way, and am not formal enough when I need to be. I used the SCA to get away from the military, and therefore tried to get away from titles by not using them.

—Kirk FitzDavid [Calontir]

A main factor in Peer Fear is simply not knowing the person involved. When I first moved to the Barony of Grey Niche I was in awe of John the Bearkiller. I had heard so much about him that I was afraid to even speak to him. As I got to know him, I lost this fear. Today I count him a friend but there are other Big Name Peers I am in awe of. Now I would probably be afraid to speak to Cariadoc of the Bow simply because I do not know him. I am sure after I got to know him, this fear would disappear also. True there are a few Atilla the Peers running around, but most Peers are nice, approachable people.

—Teresa Christina Berconi [Meridies]



"Personally, I'm not afraid of Peers, Unless-
I have to fight them, talk to them, Be around..."

—Galen of Wiltshire [Outlands]

I found it interesting to go through the rest of the back issues of *ThinkWell* when they arrived, and discover I missed the original point of the Peer Fear issue. The original discussion by Jocelyn in TW #4 had to do with being judged—and how that made the writer feel.

Being judged by **fill in peerage here** gives me the willies too. I once camped with some royalty at Pennsic and had the unfortunate chance to overhear a heated discussion of a person's recommendation for a kingdom arts award in an order meeting. Now I should not have heard this, granted—but they were very loud about it. The gist of it was that this person being considered for their ability as a scribe was being argued against (vehemently) for the way they dressed.

I am told this is not how all order meetings are but you can't prove it by me or any other non-peer. My gut reaction is—what gives anyone the right to judge me or anyone else in such a manner? I can understand judging the award-specific skills. It gives me the creepies, however, to have my character discussed in the name of "Is she peerage quality?"

Even from what people have written here I would say a good many seemingly reasonable people will judge rather hard. I can feel my character being torn to shreds already. Sound paranoid? Tell me how it is that I could know differently. What is being said about me in the meeting is assumed to be none of my business. People have been banished for telling. Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you.

I know that not every peer is a problem, but some definitely are, and the "good peers" are not the ones that tend to jump to mind when it comes up in discussion. And don't try to fix it by talking to the ones you have a problem with—they just get all huffy and say "We don't act like that."

Campaigning? It seems you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. If no one sees your stuff—if you aren't promoted to the peers—if you don't walk the walk (etc.) you don't get considered. If in order to do these things you have to change your behavior—OOPS you're campaigning and obviously should not be considered.

Where's the middle ground? How's a girl supposed to keep from getting an attitude? If you care deeply about these things you're hard pressed not to develop one. And that might just be the start of your trouble...

—Siobhan O'Riordain [Atlantia]

I laughed out loud when I read what Duke John the Beakiller wrote about peer fear. Where I come from, he is a figure of legend of nearly Paul Bunyan's stature. I've been so impressed with what he's written that now I'm even more intimidated! What a vicious circle!

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

My only first-hand meetings with Edward of Glastonburgh involved a character called "The Mystery Burgundian." What does it mean to be a SMOC,¹ and how can I be sure to avoid it?

I probably have a reputation that is not consistent. Politically I seem to be viewed as a manipulative shark,

otherwise as being friendly and approachable.

Non-peers: Much of what I do is geared to make things more pleasant for you. When I try to look and act like a powerful lord or the "parfit gentle" knight, it's for your entertainment. Your feedback is welcome.

Knighthood and nobility, in my opinion, are the central concepts of the SCA, and *every member*, not just peers and nobles are entitled to voice an opinion.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

JUDGEMENT

"Use your own judgement." "Would you please judge the cooking contest?" "We would like Laurels to judge this competition." "Thanks for judging."

"What makes you think you have the right to judge me?" "What right do the peers have to judge people?"

Is it any of your business whether an individual is a good king or a bad king? Whether an autocrat did a good job or not? Which person is the most graceful dancer on a particular evening? Which singer has the prettiest voice? Who would be the best to herald an important court? Who you can trust to take the keys to a site, to open it before anyone else is there and lock it up at the end? Who collects money at the gate? Whether the site fee is fair? Do you have the right to judge these things? Do you have the ability *not* to?

I believe it is impossible for people not to judge others. I think the perfect Buddhist monk who doesn't judge anyone else has not ever existed. I'm sure the guy who's closest to it would be pretty particular about who he allowed to visit with him in his near-perfect existence, what he ate, what he wore, etc.

Judgement is so constant and automatic that it's like breathing. By now you've decided whether you're interested in this article (if you're still reading), and you're probably already getting an opinion about whether you like where it may be headed or whether I am [in your own judgement] about to become irritating.

It is the *duty* of the peers to judge people. They are required to advise the king and queen, who also have a duty to judge people (unless they choose to give no awards whatsoever). All the people in the kingdom judge whether they think the peers and the Crown are doing a good job. In my experience, those most unhappy with some of the "worst" peers are non-peers. They're offended when peers don't seem good enough. Their complaint seems to be that the peers and the crown should have used better judgment.

I would like to assign a task to all *ThinkWell* readers. [What do you think of *that*? Don't judge too harshly, now.] Consider judgement. Talk about it to some people you consider to be thoughtful and intelligent, and see what they think about it. What is it about "judging" that scares people? What is meant by "You don't have the right to judge me"? Where's the line between being fair-minded and being too judgmental? And in the other direction, where's the line between being fair-minded and being a spineless creature with no opinions whatsoever?

—Ælflað, Mistress of Homework [Outlands]

¹ secret master of chivalry? (Ælflað's guess)

CHARISMA

The judgement question came to me as I was considering criteria for choosing friends, or recommending people for awards or offices. Once upon a time I was in a group of people discussing the problem of how certain candidates might be "weighted" as to the order in which they might receive an award. If three or five couldn't or shouldn't be given all at one moment, and if all other things seemed equal, what could be the differentiating factor? Another time the question was like this: In a group with no [pick any peerage], if there were two candidates seemingly equal in talent, contribution to the group, honor, etc., who should be the FIRST [peer of that order], to forever outrank the second one? The decision might make the difference between eternal bliss and nasty infighting. It's not a really easy question.

I thought I had a good answer when I said "Charisma. Pick the person who is more charismatic to be first."

The crowd turned against me (or at least some of the more vocal ones made enough noise for the whole crowd). "Charisma should *not* be a factor."

Wow. How can charisma not be a factor? I didn't mean the miracle-working, cult-leading charisma that biographies are written about. I just meant to consider that undefinable charm and goodness that some people have. It's hard to be angry with a charismatic person; that's part of the definition. I figured that if resentment and jealousy are concerns, the problems would be minimized if the more charismatic person were first. More people would be happier.

Was I way wrong? Is it cheating to consider charm? Should we go to written resumes, blind auditions (as in challenging for a chair in orchestra), measurable attributes? Is "not charming" or "lacking in social graces" a fault or a disability? [Gunwaldt suggests "socially challenged" as a term.] Can we ignore it? Should we try?

—Ælfæd of Duckford [Outlands]

By the very nature of the word, evaluation is subjective. There's just no such thing as an objective evaluation. Everyone puts "value" in a different place.

We don't do short-answer tests.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]
(from a phone conversation)

INTEGRITY / LONG MEMORIES

I do not believe that there can be two completely different selves. A person may be improved by attempting to meet the ideals of chivalry, courtesy and honor, even if he only makes that attempt while participating in the SCA. However, in the end, he will change or else his true character will affect his actions in the SCA. Character qualities cannot be turned on and off. They may be relaxed, but not forgotten.

I do not believe the act can be maintained, but I would rather that they act honorably.

—Conor mac Cinneide [Ansteorra]

Long term memories can sometimes work in a positive way. In my early days in the SCA there was a person

I counted as one of my friends. One day I was dropped from this person's friend list. (I still don't know why.) Long term memories remind me of the way it used to be and give me hope that one day it will be the same again.

—Teresa Berconi [Meridies]

I am the cherub-faced man mentioned by Sine.¹ In my younger years, I did a good bit of gaming and drinking. Well, I acted pretty boorish and rude (I raped her character). We all (the guys you know) thought we were pretty funny stuff. Get a little beer in us and we were *very* funny, to the point of being disgusting. Thank God my friends and guardian angels watched out and taught me the errors of my ways. A person can only get drunk and act stupid so many times. I probably hold the land speed record for trips to the great white porcegod. Anyway, I didn't even remember treating that fine woman meanly. It can be that way in the SCA. We have a political system that sometimes puts stupid infants in positions of great authority. (I mean no disrespect to real infants.) I decided, through the magic of common sense and diabetes, to quit drinking and clean up a bit. I am mortified by the thought of some of the silly things I have done. You still see semi-adults getting potted and being dorky, but the number is dropping as the organization gets older. If only we could do something with the ones who act stupid and cruel and aren't drunk.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

LANGUAGE

Two similar but contradictory articles appeared at the same time, mine in *ThinkWell* #10 and Kenneth de Lyon's in *Tournaments Illuminated* #103, so I wrote and sent Kenneth a copy of *ThinkWell*, and earned us the following letter. It would have appeared in Issue #12, but I didn't "save" often enough and there were so many footnotes that the computer file bombed and I lost it. Taking that as an act of God, I held it for this issue. I have decided to print it without the footnotes, but with a promise to provide a full copy of the original to anyone interested, and an assurance that all quotes and references here are supported in the notes. Some references are to my letter to Kenneth, and didn't appear in *ThinkWell*.

—ælflaED

What to Call That Which We Wear?

In the Spring of A.S. XXV, I wrote the piece "Garb: An Anachronistic Word," which recently appeared in *Tournaments Illuminated*, No. 103, while our founder in *ThinkWell* No. 10, p. 31...looked into the historical use of some of the terms for "what we wear" in the SCA. She suggests "clothes" or "raiment." Taking the latter first, "raiment" meaning clothes appeared in English by 1450 and possibly as early as 1375. While "raiment" is period, it does come into use rather late. With "clothes" Countess Ælfæd has a better case. The Old

¹ Issue 12, page 25.

English word “cláþas”¹ that dates at least from the late ninth century means “clothes.” “Clothing” is another possibility, though somewhat late, which dates from about 1200.

Some other words that at first glance might work are: apparel, attire, dress, garment, and gown. “Apparel” meaning armor is in use by the last decades of the 1200s but is not employed for civilian clothing until about 1400. Although “attire” referring to all of a knight’s equipment (armor, weapons, and horse) is rather common around 1300, it is first used by Geoffrey Chaucer to mean civilian clothes in the mid-1380s. The verb “to dress” with the meaning of “to put one’s clothes on” was only to appear in the third quarter of the 1400s. In the Middle Ages, “dress” as a noun meant “speech” or “talk”; not until the early 1600s did it signify civilian clothing. The earliest occurrence of “garment” with the meaning of outer clothing like a coat, cloak, or gown is about 1330, whereas its expanded definition of clothing in general came into being shortly before 1375. “Gown” as a robe is referred to in a will dated 1366, and by 1397 it was being used to mean a loose fitting outer garment and a female dress. Like “raiment” these five words came into Middle English from Old French and so appear in English far later than “gear” or “clothes.”

Even though Countess Ælflaed holds for “clothes” and “raiment,” I do not. “Raiment” enters English about the time a number of Old French words for clothing do, so it is no better than any of them; however, it does have an advantage in that it is not a commonly used word in general current speech. “Clothes,” while a part of English since the late 800s, is a very normal term for mundane clothing and as such is not distinctive enough, in my opinion. “Gear,” on the other hand, comes from Old English and is different enough from today’s terms for clothing as not to be misunderstood, when one hears “Bring your gear to this event,” which means your “SCA-clothes.” I do agree with Ælflaed’s concern that “gear” also conveys the idea of “the coronets and the tents and the toys.” But, as I noted in TI 103, it is probably too late to change what SCA-clothing is called.

—Lord Kenneth Lyon of the Curr [Calontir]

I found that when I quit thinking of and referring to my SCA clothes as “costumes” and started calling them “garb,” my sewing skills improved and the overall look of the stuff changed from “whip it together so it will stay on through the weekend” to “this has to last through this reign and lots of washes.” Even my stabs at authenticity are getting better.

—Chantal Haroldsdottir [Meridies]

ACCEPTING BLOWS

Calontir has relatively “active” marshalling, but I think this is misunderstood in other Kingdoms. In melees, our marshals will send you to resurrection, throw you off, or loudly warn you for just about anything that seems unsafe, unchivalrous, or just rude (like ignoring blows). However, in

tournament they serve as information sources and at each Crown Tournament I remind the participants that it is their right to stop the fight to ask the marshals for information. Example: I get hit by something that feels “funny.” I don’t think it was good, but I want to know better just why I don’t think it was good. The marshal better have been watching, because I stop the fight (as soon as it is appropriate) and ask, “What about that shot to my head? It felt strange to me.” Hopefully, with several viewpoints someone has the answer, say flat of the blade, or your opponent lost his grip at the moment of impact

Under this system talking to the marshals does not always imply criminal behavior. The answers to most questions, no matter who asks the question (and marshals do initiate some questions) are innocent ones. My opponent knows that I want a clean fight. And if all the answers are, “It looked like a good kill from over here,” I can choose to die well before doing my reputation any damage.

Fighting is complicated stuff and not all kills are completely obvious.

—Lars Vilhjalmsson [Calontir]

To answer Bernard de Barfleur’s question about the “warmup melee” at the first Gulf War: to the best of my knowledge and experience, this was the first time something like that has been done. The closest I have seen in the past was when, at the beginning of a battle, everybody was lined up and counted off as “ones” or “twos” regardless of their official side, then divided up for an opening melee. This loosened everyone up, and you had at least the chance of fighting with and against people from the “other side” in a non-hostile situation. One of the good things about the melee at Gulf Wars was that it was mostly one-on-one, and you could stop and talk with your opponent after the fight, instead of having to worry about the rest of the battle. I don’t know who thought it up, but it’s a great idea.

—Tivar Moondragon [Ansteorra]

CALIBRATION AND ARMOUR STANDARDS

I began participating in the SCA in the Midrealm, in a Barony that was at the time undergoing a sort of Renaissance of arts and fighting. When I moved to Caid, there was the expected culture shock, but the shock wore off and I played a great deal. While I built fledgling armouring skills, one thing that came as a great surprise was the difference in materials used for certain components. In Master Valerius’s armoury, we used 12g. for helmets as a standard. 14g. was at that time considered heavy for cuisses. They seemed to last forever. In Caid, 14g. was common fare for helmets, and although they were damaged and dented with some regularity, they were the norm. 16g. was used for cuisses but it didn’t seem to last.

Several years later, I made several sets of 14g. Italian cuisses, with a strong central ridge and a large rolled edge on the top of the cuisse for support. They were hammer hardened, because several combatants had complained of dents in their

¹ I can’t do better on the “th” symbol. It should be a thorn, for those of you who know, and for those who don’t, it’s a “th” —ælflaED

14g. harness elements. The practice where this individual was fighting was considered to be "a bit heavy," but in the space of a few short weeks the cuisses folded. Many of the combatants now wear plastic or heavily fluted legs to avoid this. Recently I saw a 12g. helmet that had no fewer than 14 major dents. {12 g. is now standard for better helmets in Caid.} Ouch!

I am now in a place [in the West—ælflaED] where the hitting is heavier than it was at my Southern practice, at least amongst a few individuals I take care when crossing swords with them—but I'm never really fully at ease in a fight where armour bits are collapsing. I expect bruising, not breakage. This is not the norm here, but it does occur regularly.

I am aware that these things seem to move in cycles, but the cycle seems to slowly move more towards heavier standards over time. A few years ago 14g. cuisses seemed like they could last forever without denting, now they have a limited life before the cuisse crumbles completely.

Although I am not really a fan of "love-tapping" blows, there is a limit to how hard we should be striking. What if these same blows were to land on a 16g. helmet worn by age? I've heard combatants challenge one another as to be the first to damage a new piece of reasonably expensive armour. This can be done in play, without dangerous spirit, but where is the line? I like a firm, solid blow but it is unnecessary to crease my helmet to prove the point. Most of us can crease a 12g. helmet, but what's the point?

—Brian Thornbird [West]

THEY CAN'T WRITE BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT HERE

Mistress Margaret van Arteveldt, of whom I wrote before, has a Laurel in weaving, was seneschal of her local group, was Atlantia's minister of arts and sciences, was baroness of her barony, and was one of the most enthusiastic members of the SCA I've ever known. She burned out. She says there were three main categories of reasons why she left: 1) Too few people actually wanted to play the game the way it's defined. She objected, for example to the fact that so many people objected to having monarchs (Sorry, Geoff!), didn't care for court or ceremony, didn't want to make any reasonable attempt at being medieval. She found some of the standard SCA anomalies difficult to justify in her head, like the juxtaposition of cultures that never coexisted in the real Middle Ages, or the active and fully open presence of pagans in what she saw as a western European Christian court; 2) In her group, as in many others, there was an overemphasis on the political in favor of all else. More time was spent on backbiting and infighting than on constructive, fun medieval re-creation, and she decided she had better ways to spend her time and money; and 3) People were engaging in too many illegal, potentially damaging, or unacceptable behaviors for her to overlook any more. These activities included drug use (including on her property after she specifically asked the perpetrators not to do it), going into her rural South Carolina town in medieval clothes with knives after she specifically asked them not to do it, driving cars down fields that were not intended to be driven on and doing major damage to her creek

bed in the process, and similar kinds of foolish or tasteless stuff. Margaret decided that, in the final analysis, there were some people and some things she would really miss, but that the chance to see and to do them was not worth the people and the nonsense she would have to tolerate in order to stay active. She also had some concern for her son, and whether it was responsible of her as a parent to allow him to be exposed to some of the less socially acceptable things that are tolerated in the SCA. (Alton grew up just fine; he's in the Navy now.) I miss Margaret a lot, but I'm not sure I could in good conscience tell her that the things that made her go away seven years ago are all gone.

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

Everyone I know who has left the SCA has done so because of politics or the nasty people who delight in spoiling every else's fun. One Baron left over a fight about swearing fealty vs. affirming allegiance. Another Baron and Baroness just got tired of the crap. Many just aren't having enough fun to make it worth putting up with the rest of it. I will never understand why so many people seem to only be happy when they can make someone else unhappy. I'm just glad I've met enough wonderful people to outweigh the petty creeps.

—Elfwyn de Barfleur [Trimaris]

REST IN PEACE

On October 23, Mistress Alys Carvelsdatter passed away at Harris Hospital in Fort Worth, after a prolonged bout with cancer. Alys was a Mistress of the Pelican and founding Baroness of Sundragon. Her SCA career began in Atenveldt, and she spent the last few years with us in Ansteorra.

—Robin of Gilwell [Ansteorra]

We had a death recently at an event. An elderly member, with multiple health problems, had an allergic reaction during the feast (in Jackson, Mississippi). He had left the medication for his allergies at home. He was taken to a local small hospital where he died about 30 minutes later. Falada and I were at another event. Everyone is pretty upset.

—John the Bearkiller [Meridies]

You could help by noting for those who might have known him that Lord Robin of Neath passed from this life on October 24, 1992 (A.S. XXVII).

—Æward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

SCA FUNERALS

Thank you, Shadan, for the account of the Calontir tragedy. The lady who was seneschal had stayed at my house the month before, as guest of my roommate. I was shocked when I heard of her death. I'd only just met her, and thought her a delightful person.

—Éowyn Amberdrake [Caid]

Duchess Eislenn the Patient, Queen at Pennsic, died of cancer on March 5, 1988. Her funeral service was not SCA, but her awards and her regalia were all placed in her coffin, along with a bottle of TAB, her drink of choice. Her husband,

George Johnson (otherwise known as Syr Talymar) raised the drape below her waist, and showed them to several of us there. There were also several squires who fought in the queen's guard at Pennsic who placed their belts within. We held a wake after the funeral, where "Eislenn stories" were told. The poor woman suffered so. We were sorry to see her gone, but glad she was no longer in pain.

—Mistress Alexis MacAlister [Middle]

PURGING PEER LISTS

I think the Order of Precedence should be an historical document, so I never think purging it is a good idea. If we don't know our own history, we are condemned to repeat it. Besides, what if one of those venerable old legends, gone for years, should decide to come back? People change their minds, or they find their life circumstances change and they have time for old hobbies again. Wouldn't it be a shame to fail to give them credit for the contributions they made, even if it was long ago? After all, none of us would have this game to play, or the level at which we play it, if someone else hadn't gone before, making discoveries that were important and innovative then, even if they're old hat now. How dare we consider writing them out of the history as though their contributions were unworthy?

—Melisande de Belvoir [Atlantia]

We're grappling with the issue in Meridies because the numbers of "inactive" folks being carried on the rolls have begun to interfere with the ability of the respective orders to conduct the business with which they are charged. One of the concepts we're looking at is an "emeritus" status which could be upgraded to active when that person gets, well, active again.....

—Edward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

Perhaps "the business with which they are charged" could be redefined. Have you set a certain percentage of people who have to be polled, or have to respond? If not, what does it matter if 80% of your Pelicans (f'r'instance) are lost? If so, why don't you just change the definitions?

Flagging the list (by putting a "not-so-active" tag on certain names) is a *whole* lot more innocuous than "purging" the list.

—Ælflaed of Duckford [Outlands]

Why bother purging the peerage rolls? Only two reasons occur to me: reading the entire Order of Precedence aloud for a Grand March, including those not in attendance (which would not have crossed my mind if someone had not mentioned it in *ThinkWell*), and insisting (due to law or custom) on getting written responses from some percentage of the peerage before creating a new peer. For the former, an easier solution would seem to be simply not announcing those who are not present. For the latter, do just what you were going to do if you were to purge the peerage roll: set a criteria for activity, publish it, and then stop polling those who do not meet it—even if they are still on the rolls.

NB: The West avoids this by discussing candidates at

events. We generally talk about an individual for a minimum of three Kingdom events (and usually more) before admission to a peerage, which allows those who cannot make some events to comment. But those who do not attend, or who just don't bother to come to meetings, do not get a voice in the decision. If they want to put in their oar, they have to make the effort to come round and do so. (Well, they can send their opinion with someone, but it may or may not get much attention paid to it—depending on the individual.)

—William the Lucky [West]

CENTRAL VS. HOME RULE

Ælflaed expresses some dislike for the SCA's diversity in various ways. I couldn't disagree more. The way the system works, the SCA is able to customize itself to the culture of the area it finds itself in. As we have been discussing almost since the inception of *ThinkWell*, there are real mundane reasons (cultural, geographical, or what-have-you) for many of the differences between Kingdoms. If the Society were stuck with exactly the same sets of rules everywhere, we would probably find ourselves with real problems as we tried to spread. Indeed, even the current diversity isn't really enough; I've heard many of the native Drachenwalders say that the SCA is just too damned American and centralized to work well in Europe.

I mean, really—does it make sense to demand that Carolingia (built on a heavily academic community, with an enormous college population, and a very high population density) share the same rules and customs as, say, the Outlands? Of course not—they're different cultures mundanely, and the Society must recognize that. If we *hadn't* developed a reasonable tolerance for cultural variety, the SCA probably wouldn't have grown further than San Francisco. (In the very early days, the East nearly split off and became an entirely separate entity, in large part due to a perception of too much dictatorship from the West.)

Nor would it do our re-creation justice. As it is, the kingdoms of the Society have *some* chance of capturing a variety of the cultures from the Middle Ages. We have kingdoms that are rather feudal (eg, the East) and others that follow rather more from the Arthurian ideals of the power of the King (eg, the West). We have kingdoms (and regions) that tend more towards early period, and others that tend more towards later.

Why should we lose this, only to gain a dull homogeneity? If people are so mentally inflexible that they can't cope with moving to an SCA kingdom with different customs, they're not gonna deal all that easily with moving in the mundane world, either.

—Justin du Coeur [East]

While "one way to do things" would certainly keep things simpler for those charged with overall administration of this goulash, I'm pretty strongly convinced that a uniform Society would not have held on to me. I've seen a fair bit of how the game is played elsewhere, and even enjoy it for what it is as a change of pace. Still, the best part for me is the knowledge that I can come home to a place where the

traditions and customs of a certain corner of the Society are unique and can stake their claims on my affections. Ælfþlæd's expressed fear about people being able to participate after a move is well taken, but I think a certain flexibility and respect on both sides can ease that sort of tradition oops! I meant transition. Tolerance can be the balm to a great many ills, if used generously.

—Ædward of Glastonburgh [Meridies]

Dear Ædward, whose wisdom and humor are a balm to a great many intolerant people: I'm not trying to pick on you. Up above, though, where you ask about taking inactive peers off the list (polling list? precedence?) so that they peers can do their business (advising? continuing to serve?) I think you're assuming we know what you were talking about.

Many, many times when I was a corporate officer people would contact me in a panic and say "He's doing X and X can never be done." "Sure it can," I would say, because I figured they were contacting our equivalent of the federal government because of a federal offense.

There are many (thousands) of people who don't know the difference between local custom and law. There are even more who don't know the difference between kingdom law and the Corpora of corporate laws and policies. When people assume that their kingdom's laws are equal to and/or the same as the corporate rules, they expect the corporate officers and the board to understand their laws in detail immediately (even if it's the middle of the night) and agree with the history and reasoning (if any) behind them and be eager to rush to enforce them. An answer like "That action doesn't violate Corpora, so if it violates your kingdom's law it's primarily a local matter" makes them insane. An answer like "Your law violates Corpora" goes over even worse.

Kingdom seneschals know this. They know that local groups operate differently and the kingdom seneschal can't always know what little quirks and rituals are at play. The locals don't usually know that their little quirks and rituals are local.

From a corporate point of view the local groups are the kingdoms. When a corporate officer has the same narrow-minded "my own kingdom's right" point of view, trouble and unhappiness will grow.

Next time I'm going to write some things I know about writing laws, because of this and because someone wrote and recommended that the Outlands make a law against slavery. I think there should *not* be a law against slavery and I want to tell you why in Issue #14 and if anyone says that means I think slavery is fine, he/she/it will be dead wrong.

—Ælfþlæd of Duckford [Outlands]

While I am certain that the individual Board members and Corporate officers are worthy of respect, I wish that they would keep their collective nose out of kingdom affairs. To my mind, Corpora should provide a structure in which different cultures can thrive without stepping on others' borders.

Sure, there needs to be a certain amount of regulation, but I think that some of their energy could be diverted away from blanket solutions to isolated problems by waiting instead of anticipating.

—Istvan Kostka [Calontir]

TEACHERS

I am in charge of organizing classes for Pennsic War XXII. I'm writing to all the kingdom chroniclers with an ad for teachers, but if any *ThinkWell* subscriber would like to offer a class for the war, I'd like to hear about it. Also, if the subscribers want an "official" time to meet (to be in the book and all that) please let me know. Any potential teachers may contact me with a title, course description, applicable fees and what day of the week and time they would prefer to teach. Thanks!

Mistress Alexis MacAlister (Beverly Roden)
3712 #F E. Patterson Rd.
Beavercreek OH 45430-1224

An up and coming thing in the Middle is signing for the hearing impaired at some of the larger kingdom events. I have offered a time at Pennsic to some of the folks involved in organizing it, so it will have some more publicity. Any thoughts from the populace?

THINKWELL DISCUSSIONS

I would like to propose that anyone interested in offering a place and time at a large event for a "philosophy practice," discussion or whatever should advertise it in *ThinkWell* if there's time, or just put up notices at the event (or announce it or whatever is traditional and appropriate in your area), and see who comes. If it's done in an easy-to-find camp, there will be no great loss if the turnout is small, it won't take special permission to schedule, etc.

My personal recommendation is to spend event time taking advantage of the entertainment available—singing, telling stories, gaming, eating, flirting—rather than discussing the structure of the Society. Perhaps a *ThinkWell* social hour would be better—meeting other readers and just telling stories and singing songs and sharing food and drink with them. The discussion might turn serious on its own, but I think *planning* a serious discussion might result in disappointed organizers. It would be a shame to create a situation where "failure" would produce socializing in a friendly fashion. If the goal is to meet people and exchange tales of travel and adventure, the possible "failure" of it turning serious might not be too disappointing.

Maybe it would help if we had a secret handshake...
—Ælfþlæd [ThinkWell]

Finn and I are tentatively planning to come out to Estrella. Please, somebody plan a *ThinkWell* party! I want to meet everyone in person.

—Garlanda de Stanas [Middle]

My camp, Saturday and Sunday night at Estrella.

Be there. Aloha.

—Ælfþlæd of Duckford [Outlands]
Vert, a duck rampant argent...a ford proper...(can't miss it)

FUNDRAISER

I'm selling actual original back issues of T.I. for \$4 and \$6 (depending on whether the issue is still available from the SCA stock clerk or not). Proceeds will be put directly toward printing and postage of ThinkWell. Please write for an up-to-the-moment list of issues available, or call 505-299-2476.

Ignore the list which you received before. Some issues are in now which weren't there then, I no longer need #30, and more is changed than not. IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A REQUEST for an issue so that you're in line when/if one is donated, please do. For lapseproof subscribers, I can just "put it on your tab."

I would like to thank Mistress Rodema, Baroness Elisheva, Lord Kristjan, Lady Gwyneth, Sir Lavan, Duke Artan and Countess Aziza, Sir Lars, Sir Raymond and Countess Susannah for donating T.I.'s. This issue is fat thanks to all the people who have bought some!

When you talk to your friends who have dropped out, see if they have thrown their T.I.'s away. Maybe they'll give them to you! (After you fill in your set, can I please have some of the extras?)

PUBLICATION POLICIES

MAKE IT FRIENDLY IF YOU CAN

I won't publish things unless I have the author's SCA name, real name, and address, but I might publish it "name withheld" or "anonymous" if requested.

As much as I can fit in, I'll put in, attempting to get some of everyone's ideas presented.

FEEL FREE TO BRING UP NEW TOPICS as well as comment on what's gone before, even back to the first issue.

length—no such thing as too short. One-liner smart-aleck responses are welcome. If something needs to be long, try to make it fun. Long and humorless are the worst combo.

content—make it productive, positive, don't name names in a negative context

deadline—Send what you have when you're finished. If you miss one issue and it makes the one after, no big deal. When I get near thirty pages, I'll start winding it down.

format—legibly on paper, preferably (second choice is a diskette my Macintosh can read)

cartoons—same as above. Don't use recognizable people in a negative way.

Anything I think might get you or me into trouble will not be published (but I might send it back to be toned down, or print excerpts or a paraphrase).

EVERY IDEA IS A SEED

Thanks for all the chain letters. I've always been interested in chain letters and the spontaneous combustion of humans. Maybe if I collect and break enough chain letters, the accumulated bad luck will trigger my other interest there.

I also love Christmas cards, and I guess there's no better time of year for a hint like that.

—Ælflaed of Duckford

ThinkWell #13

as of December 1, 1992,

went to:

Outlands	46	Calontir	12
Caid	20	West	10
Meridies	19	Atlantia	9
Ansteorra	17	Atenveldt	9
Middle	17	Trimaris	7
East	16	An Tir	6

plus a few scattered samples.

There are about a dozen on the list who are expired.

The top six are still the same, but Meridies went to third place from sixth, and the Middle is gaining fast. Atenveldt's sudden jump is the result of the Christmas gift-giving of Viscount Alan Youngforest.

We have subscribers in Tasmania and South Australia, in Ontario and British Columbia, and in 36 states of the U.S. We're lacking CT, DE, HI, IN, KY, LA, ME, MT, NH, ND, RI, SD, VT, WV (excuse the post office abbreviations, but lack of use over the years has made me forget the "real" abbreviations). These were counted in one pass; there may be errors.

AUTHORIZATIONS

(new topic)

I have been distressed by the ever-expanding requirements for authorizing to fight with rattan weapons, or fencing gear, or archery gear, or marshal, or carry water... As detailed and exclusive as this system is getting, something important has been missed. Many, many people in the SCA get hurt each year because there is no office or procedure requiring a person to be authorized to safely write letters in the SCA. We need such a system. It should include separate authorizations for the use of typewriter, word processor or pen (including calligraphy and normal handwriting). I further propose that Ælflaed of Duckford be named Society Correspondence Marshal, and that everyone who was published in ThinkWell in or prior to issue #12 (just for the sheer sake of excluding someone) be warranted as Correspondence Marshals-at-Large.

—Galen of Bristol [Ansteorra]

Ay, yi, yi. This *would* come from Ansteorra. Don't you think it should be put in T.I. for comment? With equipment inspection report forms and instructions not to write to anyone who hasn't signed a waiver, surely we need Kingdom Great Officers in addition to at-large, and therefore warrants for all locals and spelling tests with proctors, or maybe spelling bees on the field, so that a tie can be fought out by the speller or his/her champion, *blah blah blah and then I'll deserve my Palms*

—Ælflaed of Duckford [Good Bye!]

Here ends ThinkWell #13. December 3 1992.